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ABSTRACT

Although only a few dozen school systems have formally embraced site-based management, thousands of districts across the country are experimenting with it in some form. The study described in this report attempts to distill the experience of pioneering school systems, so that citizens and educators in other localities can benefit from it. During the 1989-90 and 1990-91 school years, a RAND research team studied five major urban and suburban school systems that had adopted site-based management: Columbus, Ohio; Dade County, Florida; Edmonton, Alberta (Canada); Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky; and Prince William County, Virginia. Newspaper and scholarly accounts of site-based management in other communities were also considered. The report draws five major conclusions: (1) though site-based management focuses on individual schools, it is really a reform of the entire school system; (2) site-based management will lead to real changes at the school level only if it is a school system's basic reform strategy; (3) site-based schools are likely to evolve over time and to develop distinctive characters, goals, and operating styles; (4) a system of distinctive, site-based schools requires a rethinking of accountability; and (5) the ultimate accountability mechanism for a system of distinctive site-based schools is parental choice. These findings have specific implications for the entire school community. An appendix provides an overview of the five districts studied. (MLH)

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# Decentralization and Accountability in Public Education

Paul T. Hill, Josephine Bonan

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# Decentralization and Accountability in Public Education

Paul T. Hill, Josephine Bonan

Supported by the
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Institute for Education and Training

RAND

# PREFACE

This report is the first publication of RAND's Institute for Education and Training. The institute aims to broaden the scope of traditional educational research to include the roles and interests of employers and the broader community, as well as conventional educational institutions.

Site-based management applies ideas derived from business—decentralization of initiative and participatory decisionmaking—to public schools. It also implies changes in the roles of people outside the schools: parents, the community, and the elected school board. Because of its potential for changing the relationships of schools to the community, site-based management is an appropriate subject for the institute's first study.

The report is written for people who want to understand how site-based management will affect their own schools and how they can contribute to the process. It speaks to school superintendents, board members, business and community leaders, parents, teachers, and principals. The research on which the report is based was funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

# SUMMARY

Site-based management, one of today's most widely discussed educational reforms, involves shifting the initiative in public education from school boards, superintendents, and central administrative offices to individual schools. The purpose of site-based management, like the movement toward participatory management in business, is to improve performance by making those closest to the delivery of services—teachers and principals—more independent and therefore more responsible for the results of their school's operations.

Though only a few dozen school systems have formally embraced site-based management, thousands of districts across the country are experimenting with it in some form. This study attempts to distill the experience of school systems that have led the way, so that citizens and educators in other localities can benefit from it.

During the 1989–1990 and 1990–1991 school years, a RAND research team studied five major urban and suburban school systems that had adopted site-based management—Columbus, Ohio; Dade County, Florida; Edmonton, Alberta (Canada); Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky; and Prince William County, Virginia. We also tracked newspaper and scholarly accounts of site-based management in other communities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Montgomery County (Maryland), Salt Lake City, Tampa, and Indianapolis.

The report draws the following five major conclusions:

1. Though site-based management focuses on individual schools, it is in fact a reform of the entire school system.

Schools cannot change their established modes of operation if all of the expectations and controls of a centralized system remain intact. School boards, superintendents, and central office staffs must commit themselves to long-term decentralization and enable the schools to use their independence for the benefit of students.

2. Site-based management will lead to real changes at the school level only if it is a school system's basic reform strategy, not just one among several reform projects.

Site-based management is the basic process whereby a school staff and community define needs and coordinate efforts to meet them. It

cannot be just one of several uncoordinated projects operating in the school or in the school system.

3. Site-managed schools are likely to evolve over time and to develop distinctive characters, goals, and operating styles.

After an initial period of floundering, in which many school staffs concern themselves with labor-management and budget issues, schools that are free to solve their own problems will develop specific and well-defined missions, climates, and methods of instruction. These need not be unique or innovative—many schools may develop as frank imitations of an existing model appropriate for their situation. But schools are likely to become less and less alike. The challenge for school boards and superintendents will be how to assist schools and guarantee quality in a system whose basic premise is variety, not uniformity.

4. A system of distinctive, site-managed schools requires a rethinking of accountability.

Though state legislatures and school boards will remain ultimately responsible for the schools, they must find ways of holding them accountable without dominating local decisions or standardizing practice. The basis of a site-managed school's accountability must be its ability to define and maintain a distinctive character, not its compliance with procedural requirements.

The accountability issues for a site-managed school are the following: Are the school climate, curriculum, and pedagogy well matched to the students to be served, and does the school deliver on its promises about the experiences it will provide students? A distinctive school ultimately lives on its reputation, which is based on its constituency's overall impression of its performance.

5. The ultimate accountability mechanism for a system of distinctive site-managed schools is parental choice.

Choice underlines the need for each school to offer a coherent social and instructional climate and to prove that it can deliver on promises. For a decentralized school system, choice creates a decentralized accountability process in which the individual school carries the burden of product differentiation and proof of performance. Even school systems that cannot move all the way to full parental choice can make individual schools the focus of accountability by basing performance goals on each school's mission and strategy.

These five findings have specific implications for the entire community in which a school is located:

- Businesses, civic leaders, and other lay supporters of the schools must understand that site-based management represents a profound change in the ways that schools do business. It will not always work smoothly or produce quick results.
- The school board must commit itself to site-based management as its basic strategy of reform, and the superintendent must promote it as a primary task.
- The teachers' union must agree to collaborate with the superintendent, preparing teachers to accept greater responsibility and intervening in schools frozen by internal conflicts.
- The traditional control mechanisms of the school system's central office must relax and its responsiveness to schools requesting help must increase.
- Teachers and principals in each school must move beyond normal short-term preoccupations with their working conditions to issues of climate, curriculum, and pedagogy that fit the needs of the neighborhood and the student body.
- Teachers and principals must develop a new culture of accountability in which they take the initiative to inform parents and the general public about what they intend to provide students and how they will ensure that students succeed.

Like many other ideas that call for a change in organizational and human behavior, the decentralization of school systems has progressed slowly and with difficulty. This is not to say that site-based management has failed. Rather, school boards and central offices have failed to recognize that their structures, operations, and cultures must change along with those of the schools if site-based management is to improve students' education. But the difficulty of decentralizing is not an argument for rejecting the concept.

The situation that motivated site-based management in the first place still obtains. Past efforts to control schools in detail from the outside, by contract, court decree, regulation, and financial incentives, have made schools more responsive to higher authorities than to the students and parents they are supposed to serve. Many principals and teachers, because they do not feel free to make full use of their professional judgment, have come to concentrate on tasks that are discrete, bounded, and noncontroversial—that is, the implementation of programs and the imparting of specific facts and skills—rather than on

cognitive development, the integration of ideas, and students' personal growth.

If site-based management is to work, however, school staff must come to take more initiative and responsibility in serving their students. Citizens concerned about school performance naturally ask, What if site-based management doesn't work? Won't we have destroyed the central offices and have nothing left?

The answer is that site-based management has already worked in many schools in the sense that staffs are taking the initiative in serving students' needs and taking responsibility for results. Those schools must not be reregulated simply because other schools are finding the task difficult. School systems must continue to help schools become strong competent organizations, not clones of a central model or products of external regulation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We owe a debt of gratitude to the hundreds of people—school administrators, teachers, union officials, and school board members—who shared their experience with us. We are particularly grateful to Frank Petruzielo and Lynn Shenkman of the Dade County Public Schools and Peter Gerber of the MacArthur Foundation, whose suggestions influenced the design of the study. Though responsibility for the final product is ours alone, we benefited from comments by Donald Thomas of Harold Webb Associates, James Harvey of James Harvey & Associates, Jane David of the Bay Area Research Group, Michael Kirst of Stanford University, and Gail Foster of the Toussaint Institute.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the premise underlying site-based management (SBM), individual schools that take responsibility for devising their own educational programs will serve students better than schools that deliver standard services mandated from above. Thus, SBM places institutional decisions in the hands of teachers and principals, the people with the closest day-to-day contact with students. Several school districts in the United States have begun to implement the concept.

In this study, we attempt to distill the experience of school systems that have led the way in implementing the concept of site-based management so that other educational leaders may benefit from that experience. Because other kinds of institutions, particularly businesses, have also sought to improve their performance through participatory decisionmaking, we try, in addition, to identify the lessons that they have learned about the requirements and consequences of decentralization.[1]

We aim to inform two audiences: school personnel and the public. The first group includes people directly involved in the management and operation of local school systems—school board members, superintendents, central office administrators, union leaders, principals, and teachers—whose jobs change with site-based management. The second group includes parents and other members of the public—local political and business leaders, state government officials, news media managers, and other opinion leaders—whose expectations for site-based management will ultimately determine whether the concept has the time and support it needs to succeed. For these audiences, we hope to provide preliminary answers to the following questions:

- What can site-based management accomplish, and how does it fit in with other educational reform and improvement efforts?
- How can school systems reverse long-established habits of central control and local compliance? How can the staffs of individual schools be encouraged to take the initiative in solving their students' problems, and how can they get the assistance and resources they need to act effectively?

[1]A study with similar goals was published as this report went to press. See Charles Mojkowski, *Developing Leaders for Restructuring Schools*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1991.

- What obstacles and setbacks must be anticipated, and how might they be overcome?
- What must happen in schools where staff members resist taking the initiative or fail to help students?
- What can school system officials, union leaders, principals, teachers, parents, and members of the community do to make site-based management work?

Because site-based management is a relatively new phenomenon, we did not expect to find definitive answers to these questions in our research. Complete answers can emerge only over time, and they require serious longitudinal studies. We hoped, nevertheless, to extract lessons now available from the experience of school systems in the vanguard of this movement.

The study employed two methods: First, we analyzed the experience of leading site-managed school systems. Second, we reviewed the methods used by business and the professions—both of which rely on local unit performance but are constrained by public expectations and client needs—to encourage initiative while controlling quality.

## FIVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS STUDIED

During the 1989–1990 and 1990–1991 school years, we studied five major urban and suburban school districts that have adopted site-based management. Limited study resources necessitated a small sample, but we tried to represent urban and suburban districts, a range of locations, and both new and long-standing site-based management initiatives. The school districts included Columbus, Ohio; Dade County, Florida; Edmonton, Alberta (Canada); Jefferson County, Kentucky; and Prince William County, Virginia.

### Columbus

Columbus, Ohio, is a midsized urban school district with 66,000 students in some 136 schools. Like many urban districts, Columbus has faced declining federal support, racial tensions, court-ordered busing to achieve desegregation, a high dropout rate, teacher dissatisfaction, falling college entrance rates, and middle-class flight. By the mid-1980s, most observers believed that Columbus's schools were failing and that drastic reform was necessary.

### Dade County

The Dade County public school system is the fourth largest district in the United States. During the 1987–1988 school year, it served 254,235 students, 43 percent of whom are Hispanic, 3 percent black, 23 percent non-Hispanic white, and 1 percent other. The district employs 23,000 full-time staff, including 14,000 teachers, and has a budget of nearly $1.5 billion a year.

Since the school district is a county system, it embraces an enormous and varied geographical area, including both inner city and suburbs, commercial and residential wealth, and impoverished neighborhoods.

### Edmonton

Edmonton, Alberta (Canada), is a large school district with almost 195 urban and suburban schools and 68,000 students. Edmonton public schools have been experimenting with site-based management for over a decade, having adopted SBM largely as a result of the personal philosophy of the superintendent, Dr. Michael Strembitsky, who has served in that position since the early 1970s.

### Jefferson County

Jefferson County, Kentucky, is the nation's 17th largest school district, with 156 schools serving some 93,000 students in Louisville and its suburbs. Jefferson County public schools have been actively involved in educational reform and restructuring since the early 1980s. The district's reform efforts are based on a wide range of approaches, including site-based management, shared decisionmaking, and strengthening the teaching profession. In particular, the district has concentrated on finding ways to relate this systemwide vision for change to the individual needs of each school.

### Prince William County

Prince William County, Virginia, is located about 30 miles south of Washington, D.C. The suburban district has 60 schools and some 43,000 students. The tremendous growth experienced in Prince William County in recent years has added almost 1000 new students a year to its public schools. According to recent estimates, this growth rate will continue for the foreseeable future.

We visited each of the U.S. districts at least twice; we met with the Edmonton superintendent and conducted telephone interviews with other Edmonton school officials. Table 1 presents an overview of these five districts; summaries of the site-management plans operating in each appear in the appendix.

In addition, we studied the newspaper and scholarly accounts of site-based management in other districts, including Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Montgomery County (Maryland), Salt Lake City, Tampa, and Indianapolis. In Dade County, we also worked directly with the principals and teachers who were assembling staff members for the newly constituted "Saturn" schools, the curriculum and instructional methods of which were designed by their own staffs and which were intended to operate from the beginning under site-based management.

We interviewed school superintendents, central office administrators, teachers' union representatives, school principals, teachers, parents, and students. Whenever possible we sat in on school board sessions, meetings of school shared-decisionmaking cabinets, and public consultations with parents.

## TERMS OF DISCUSSION

*Site-based management* shifts decisionmaking responsibility and authority from the central office to the school. It reverses a trend, evident at least since the mid-1960s, to try to improve school performance through general-purpose instruments of public policy—regulation, mandate, enforcement, and legal action. According to the theory of site-based management, all decisions of educational consequence are to be made at the school and none may be compelled by regulation in the school district. In practice, however, it may be understood as a relative term, i.e., as an increase in the number or importance of decisions made at the school level.

Site-based management is frequently paired with another term, *shared decisionmaking*. The latter represents a shift in the balance, in an individual school, from control of all important issues by the principal to some degree of open discussion with the staff. Under shared decisionmaking, all decisions are to be made by vote or consensus. Less absolute versions are possible in practice, however; e.g., the principal may make more, and more important, decisions in consultation with the staff.

**Table 1**

**Overview of Site-Based Management in Five School Districts**

| | Goal | Initiator | Phase-in | Limits on Schools | Administrative Changes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Columbus | School improvement | Superintendent, teachers' union | 5–10 schools per year | Plan, waivers required | Major reorganization; decentralization; down-size |
| Dade County | Teacher professionalization | Superintendent, teachers' union | 25 pilots, ~225 schools by 4th year | Plan, waivers required | Minor |
| Prince William County | School improvement, public support | Superintendent | 5 schools in 1st year; all schools in 2d | Plan, waivers required; budget set by plan | Reorganization to cut administrative layers |
| Louisville | School improvement | Superintendent, business community | 10 schools in 1st year; all eventually | Flexible within chosen school model | Reorganization to cut administrative layers |
| Edmonton | Budgetary, administrative decentralization | Superintendent | All schools currently | Plan, superintendent must approve | Major reorganization, decentralization |

NOTE: Columbus school district officials describe site-based management as being of indefinite duration; officials of the other four school districts consider it permanent.

Site-based management does not necessarily imply shared decision-making: Principals may gain increased freedom of action without sharing it with staff. But the two reforms are usually combined, because both are based on the same two assumptions. Under the first assumption, the people in closest contact with students are the ones most likely to make good decisions on the design and sequencing of instruction. Under the second, adults in a school will perform best if they perceive themselves to be (1) free to make judgments on how students should be served and (2) responsible to parents for the results.[2]

The term *restructuring* is frequently used with site-based management and is also seldom sharply defined. Restructuring may refer to specific changes within a school (e.g., block scheduling or arranging for one set of teachers to stay with a group of students as long as they are in the school) or to systemic changes (e.g., eliminating major central office units or privatizing formerly centralized functions, such as the delivery of staff development courses). For the purposes of this report, site-based management is the core concept; restructuring is a separate issue.

Site-based management and shared decisionmaking imply a situation in which principals and teachers gain greater control of the use of school resources and greater freedom to initiate changes in organization, instructional materials, teaching styles, class schedules, and other student services. But many key issues remain unresolved: Must site-managed schools control their own budgets and have the freedom to select new staff members who fit into the school's academic program and social climate? May a site-managed school create its own curriculum, or should it be guided and constrained by goals and principles of instruction set elsewhere? May a school community, including staff and parents, define the grounds on which

[2]Analysts Andy Hargreaves and Jane David both note that motivations for site-based management differ from one school system to another. In some cases, site-based management is seen as a way of ensuring the enthusiastic implementation of a new, centrally mandated curriculum. In others, it is a way of responding to the increasing demographic diversity of a growing metropolitan area. It may also be part of an effort to professionalize teaching; and in a few instances, it is a way of increasing the leverage of parent groups and neighborhood associations. But in all cases, the essential character of site-based management is an increasing reliance on teachers and principals to assess the needs of students, construct appropriate services, and maintain the confidence and support of parents. See Andy Hargreaves, "Contrived Collegiality: A Sociological Analysis," paper prepared for presentation at the XIIth meeting of the International Sociological Association, Madrid, July 9–13, 1990. See also Jane L. David, "Restructuring in Progress: Lessons from Pioneering Districts," in Richard F. Elmore et al., *Restructuring Schools: The Next Generation of Educational Reform*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1990.

performance shall be evaluated, or must it continue to be judged by central authorities on standard performance measures?

The range of activities being called site-based management indicates that these issues remain unresolved. Some "site-managed" schools enjoy considerable control over their budgets, staffing, and outcome measures; others have very little. Some school systems that have never formally adopted site-based management rely more on the initiative of principals and teachers than some districts that have announced a movement toward decentralization. In many nominally site-managed school systems, school staffs are encouraged to operate democratically, but their actions are still tightly constrained by policies, regulations, and contracts; waivers may be technically available but hard to obtain, and teachers and principals know that they must not interfere in certain aspects of school policy.

Site-based management, in essence a form of decentralization, represents a shift in the locus of initiative from individuals who have responsibility for the entire organization to individuals who have responsibility only for particular areas or functions. Though decentralization can involve geographic relationships—from a head office to dispersed branch offices or specialized operating units—it can also apply to organizations entirely under one roof.

Site-based management is not the first decentralization movement in American education, but it may be the first to increase the freedom enjoyed by individual schools. Administrative decentralization, such as New York City's creation of 32 district superintendencies and local school boards, created opportunities for locally based activists and interest groups; it did not, however, change the schools' accountability to multiple bureaucratic power centers, some located in their local board offices and some in the school chancellor's office.

No organization is altogether centralized or decentralized: People in the most tightly controlled organization still have some capacity to deviate from procedures, and people in the most freewheeling organization still must act in pursuit of broader institutional goals. In general, however, organizations tend to be decentralized if (1) their products or services must respond to local conditions and (2) if staff members in local or specialized parts of the organization are expected to exercise sound judgment.[3]

[3]For a discussion of rationales for different balances of centralization and decentralization in public sector organizations, see James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Basic Books, New York, 1989, Ch. 9.

In the sections that follow, we discuss two basic issues in the development of site-based management. The first is the creation of initiative at the school level and the complementary adjustment of central office practices and expectations, covered in Sec. 2. The second issue is accountability: how site-managed schools can demonstrate that they are operating in the interests of students and the general public. The issue is covered in Sec. 3, which shows how nonschool institutions have resolved the accountability issue, and in Sec. 4, which suggests specific approaches that schools might take. Section 5, the conclusion, sums up the implications of site-based management for the agencies of government that have controlled more traditional centrally managed public schools. An appendix presents an overview of the five school districts on which the report is based.

# 2. SCHOOL SYSTEMS' EXPERIENCE WITH SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

School systems gradually became more and more centralized between 1960 and 1980 as demands for compliance with civil rights mandates, state and federal program regulations, and union contracts increased. David Tyack's name for this tendency, *fragmented centralization*, captures the compliance orientation precisely.[1] Schools were beholden to central authorities; however, demands were imposed piecemeal, and conflicts among central office demands had to be resolved at the school level.[2]

## OVERCOMING CENTRALIZATION

The site-based management movement responds to fragmented centralization. Advocates of site-based management are not universally sanguine about the competence and motivation of teachers and principals, but they believe that schools will become more effective only if teachers and principals gain a sense of personal responsibility for their students' performance. Relocating initiative to the school level is seen as a precondition to that sense of responsibility.

Site-based management must, however, counter the many strong centralizing forces at work in school systems. Some such forces are endemic to public education and cannot be eliminated. For example, state and local officials retain the ultimate constitutional responsibility for providing children with an education. These elected officials risk the loss of political support if they raise taxes or if citizens believe schools to be wasteful or ineffective.

Other centralizing forces, such as the following, are rooted in present-day politics and might be overcome by a comprehensive reform of school governance:

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[1]David Tyack, "Restructuring in Historical Perspective: Tinkering Toward Utopia," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 92, No. 2, Winter 1990, pp. 170–191. See also Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1974.

[2]For an early analysis of the practical consequences of fragmented centralization, see Jackie Kimbrough and Paul T. Hill, *The Aggregate Effects of Federal Education Programs*, RAND, R-2638-ED, September 1981.

- Federal and state legislators have strong incentives to create programs of general applicability, the benefits of which can be monitored, distinguished from the effects of all other programs, and thus credited to the political bodies that enacted them.
- State and local administrative agencies employ people whose job descriptions and professional identities traditionally focus on standardizing and controlling school programs.
- Teachers' unions negotiate standard working conditions across all schools and resist aggressive evaluation of teacher performance.
- Organizations representing groups that need or want special services (e.g., handicapped, gifted, and language minority groups) still press for general policies that favor themselves and constrain schools.
- Potential litigants retain access to the courts, which can order sweeping changes in school services, funding, and attendance patterns.

In addition, most teachers and administrators have firsthand professional knowledge only of centrally controlled schools. Though most profess to dislike working under central control, few have concrete experience with the alternative. Some have come to terms with the limits on their discretion and can be expected to find the added burdens of full professional responsibility excessive.[3]

Declaring a policy of site management does not implement it. Site-based management has many natural opponents in central offices, legislatures, and courts. Further, because some schools may have difficulty eliciting the full support of their own teaching staffs and administrators, comparable strategies of persuasion and neutralization are necessary at the school level.

Based on our fieldwork in school systems that are trying site-based management and on a review of decentralization processes in non-school settings, we offer the following observations about school site-based management:

- Site-based management will not work if it is one of several reform efforts of the board of education and/or central office.

[3]The recent rejection by the Rochester teachers' union of a contract that traded higher pay for increased teacher responsibility provides the most vivid recent evidence that some teachers do not relish the increased responsibility that comes with professional independence and pay.

- The traditional control mechanisms of the central office must be weakened and the office's ability to provide technical and material help requested by schools must be increased.
- Teachers must bear heavier burdens of responsibility and their unions must agree to collaborate with the superintendent, leading their own members and intervening in schools frozen by internal conflicts.
- Schools need help in establishing internal decisionmaking processes and clarifying the roles of principals, teachers, and parents.
- The central office must help schools coordinate their programs so that students are prepared to move from one to another.

## "PROJECTITIS"

Site-based management cannot succeed if it is regarded as one among many projects whereby the board and central office tinker with the schools. If, as happened in some of the school districts we visited, the school board and superintendent encourage site-based management at the same time that they mandate changes in curriculum, instructional schedules, textbooks, and teacher responsibilities, they send a mixed message. The schools are told to take the initiative and, at the same time, to accept new constraints.

Site-based management cannot coexist with "projectitis," the practice of operating different reform efforts simultaneously within one organization. Projectitis diffuses effort, complicates school organization, and makes different members of a school staff accountable to different units of the central office. Site-based management serves the contrary purpose, enabling school staff to create a shared vision of what their school should be and to coordinate their actions accordingly.

If site-based management is just one of many reform efforts, school staff have little reason to believe that the superintendent and school board want them to define and take responsibility for their own programs. Like a corporation's central strategy, decentralization requires discipline at the top—following one strategy implies a decision to resist following others. Leaders must not only develop a central strategy; they must also resist the temptation to reward every new idea with a project.

All of the districts that we studied displayed some residue of projectitis. Edmonton demonstrated the least, presumably because the

Canadian federal and provincial governments have created fewer categorical programs than their U.S. counterparts. Prince William County and Louisville also displayed serious commitment to site-based management.

Under Joseph Fernandez, Dade County had clearly made site-based management its central strategy, and many senior administrators staked their careers on its success. But many competing priorities remained. As the Dade County schools' evaluation unit found in early 1991, "There is evidence that SBM is losing its 'unique visibility'" in the school system, as myriad other innovations are superimposed on SBM school programming.[4]

In most other districts, site-based management was in the early stages of development and had not attained the status of the central reform strategy. The Columbus plan was comprehensive and the board and superintendent were committed to it. Unfortunately, the superintendent and board fell out over personnel issues, and the state legislature issued a complex set of new curriculum and testing mandates that dominated the central office's attention. The superintendent resigned at the end of 1990, leaving the future of his reforms uncertain.

In other places, notably Los Angeles and Montgomery County, site-based management was implemented in a few places on a trial basis. All other mandates were retained, and the board asserted that it would cancel the experiment within a year or two if it did not produce unmistakable gains in teacher satisfaction or student achievement.

All reform strategies need not be fully implemented at once: An initial Dade County pilot project helped identify implementation problems and demonstrated the school system's commitment. Other schools learned from the pilot and could adopt site-based management confident of continued support. Additional schools were added gradually, and some required a great deal of help from the outside before they stabilized as site-managed schools.

But small-scale tests of site-based management, without a prior commitment to sustain and expand it, are problematical. As was evident in Montgomery County and Los Angeles, it is hard to convince teachers and principals that small pilot tests of decentralization will last long enough to reward the effort required to implement it. When

[4]Robert A. Collins and Marjorie K. Hanson, *Summative Evaluation Report, School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Project, 1987–88 Through 1989–90*, Dade County Public School Office of Educational Accountability, January 1991, p. xii.

decentralization is seen as a purely experimental effort, teachers and principals are understandably reluctant to deviate from standard procedures. Central office administrators, fearing that variances once established will be hard to eliminate, also hesitate to grant waivers.

The superintendent and board leadership must discipline themselves to consider all actions in light of their implications for decentralization. As new members join the board, or superintendents leave and are replaced with someone from outside the school system, incumbents can pass on their commitment to the strategy by explaining its importance to newcomers.

The board, superintendent, and teachers' union must also make their commitment to site-based management known, and they must work to inform and persuade the public of its importance. Site-based management must be fully explained to the whole community for three reasons:

- First, school improvement through site-based management takes time. Supporters and critics of the school system must be on notice that the full effects of the new reform will not be evident immediately.
- Second, individual schools may want to build programs that require private resources and volunteer time, and businesses and civic groups should understand that the schools are free to seek resources and take distinctive initiatives.
- Third, the board and superintendent need to insulate themselves against pressures to solve every problem that arises through new policies and mandates.

Citizens who see a problem in an individual school want top officials to fix it, and officials may feel embarrassed having to explain why they do not make full and immediate use of their authority. Concerns about lunch menus, school dismissal schedules, a particular teacher's competence, and methods of teaching bilingual education all arose during our fieldwork, and school board members were strongly tempted to resolve all of them. Refusing to do so on the basis of a prior commitment to decentralization takes political courage; but it is easier to do if the board and superintendent have thoroughly informed the public about their reform strategy.

## THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE

Agreement on strategy is not enough. The strategy must be implemented day-to-day in the actions of the entire school system. In this, the superintendent is indispensable. Like the chief executive officer of a business, the superintendent must symbolize commitment to the central strategy, sustain consensus by constantly reaffirming the strategy's importance, and act to overcome barriers and root out opposition. A superintendent who sends mixed signals—that site-based management might be abandoned after a while or that he or she may be ambivalent about it—can singlehandedly destroy a site-management initiative. Alternatively, a superintendent who becomes the chief manager and promoter of site management greatly increases the chances of its success.

The clearest example of a superintendent who made promotion of site-based management a personal mandate is Joseph Fernandez in Miami. With Pat Tornillo, the teachers' union executive director, Fernandez campaigned tirelessly for the site-management initiative, encouraging school-level staff and discouraging central office staff and board members who advocated actions that would conflict with decentralization. Superintendents Edward Kelly in Prince William County and Michael Strembitsky in Edmonton played similar roles, albeit with less publicity than Fernandez.

Ronald Etheridge, the Columbus superintendent, made a public commitment to site-based management and to his partnership in the effort with teachers' union president John Grossman. But Etheridge's attention and his political capital were soon concentrated on a dispute over staff firings. After Etheridge's departure, the Columbus board and teachers' union remained committed in principle to decentralization, but the day-to-day management of reform became a responsibility of lower-ranking officials. Many of those officials were committed to site-based management but lacked the leverage to neutralize the narrower and more traditional agendas of central office staff.

In Chicago, Los Angeles, and Montgomery County, superintendents kept their distance from site-based management, treating it as one among many programs to be dutifully administered. In those districts, some individual schools were able to seize the initiative to alter their own programs, but most schools remained awash in confusion about the goals, boundaries, and permanence of site-based management.

The superintendent's role in promoting site-based management resembles that of a chief executive officer (CEO) in corporate decentralization. Only the chief executive can convince people in local offices that the corporate incentive structure has changed and that they will be supported and rewarded for independent action. Only the CEO can persuade central managers to abandon old habits of intervening in local office business and assure them that they will not be punished if a local office makes a mistake. Decentralization can require a CEO to turn against his own head office staff, which was built to enhance his ability to exercise central command and control, and to join in coalition with the leaders and staff of local business units, e.g., the individual schools.

A school system that attempts site-based management implicitly accepts the risk that something, somewhere, will go wrong. The superintendent must make two things clear: First, those risks exist and they are preferable to the continuation of low performance caused by excessive centralization. Second, when problems occur, they must be dealt with in ways that are consistent with site-based management, not in ways that recentralize the school system.

## REPLACING CENTRAL CONTROL WITH HELP

School staff understand that most superintendents have a brief tenure. They will not consider site-based management permanent if it depends wholly on one person's—the superintendent's—sustained effort. If site-based management is to survive, the recentralizing capacity of the head office must be eliminated.

### Weakening Instruments of Control

Most school systems attempting site-based management try to reduce the size of their central office staff, if only through the expedient of relocating administrators in regional or area offices. In many cases this is only a cosmetic change. As was evident in several of the districts that we visited, regional offices can control schools from the outside as effectively as central offices.

The changes in the central office must amount to more than the creation of a new organization chart.[5] Many traditional functions of the

[5]For an assessment of possible consequences for one major school system's central office, see Michael W. Kirst, "Chicago Schools Central Office: Progress Toward a New Role," unpublished paper, Stanford University, 1990.

superintendent's office—standardizing curriculum, ensuring that similar schools use their budgets similarly, monitoring adherence to annual instructional schedules, allocating maintenance services and supplies, and overseeing compliance with categorical program regulations and mandates—draw the attention of school staff away from day-to-day issues of teaching and instruction. If supervisory functions are allowed to continue, even in a reorganized central office, they provide ready channels for recentralization.

Though many school systems have recognized the desirability of participatory decisionmaking, few have understood the need for real changes in organizational structure, central office staff size, and administrative incentives. Columbus made the most sweeping formal changes, incorporating all school functions into one office of Teaching and Learning under an associate superintendent who was promoted into the job as as supporter of site-based management. But when the superintendent became distracted by criticism of his personnel policies, the new associate was unable to eliminate strong vestiges of the traditional supervisory organizations.

Dade and Prince William counties recognized the importance of exempting their first few pilot site-managed schools from normal administrative processes. Both established special structures that guaranteed quick and individualized attention from the purchasing, personnel, and maintenance departments and provided direct access to the superintendent and his senior staff. Both also designated a senior administrator as the superintendent's emissary to oversee development of the site-managed schools and intervene with other administrators on the schools' behalf.

As Dade and Prince William made the transition from pilot to full implementation, the special arrangements were phased out. At this writing, the changes in Prince William are too recent to analyze. In Dade County, the transition from a 25-school pilot to implementation in half the county's 500 schools also led to the demise of the special administrative arrangements. At the beginning of the 1989–1990 school year, all 250 site-managed schools returned to the control of the school system's regional assistant superintendents, responsible for large offices that were microcosms of the traditional central office structure. Staffs of site-managed schools reported that their vulnerability to central control and bureaucratic clearances increased immediately.[6]

[6]See, for example, Collins and Hanson, 1991, pp. 21–23.

Salt Lake City provides an example of a school system whose central office was so weakened that it was unable to reestablish control over site-managed schools. When he was appointed in 1973, superintendent Donald Thomas encouraged site-based management through a combination of decentralized teacher evaluation and school-site budgeting.

As Salt Lake City schools established their independence and created community support (i.e., created groups that could complain to the school board about new regulations), Thomas reduced the size of the central office and eliminated all specialized supervisory positions except that of the federal program coordinator. Everyone in the central office either had general responsibility for the schools (the superintendent) or was a consultant and resource, but not a manager. By 1974, principals answered only to the superintendent. No one else in the school system had a title that included the word "superintendent": no deputy, no associate, no assistant superintendent.

According to teachers and principals interviewed in Salt Lake City, subsequent superintendents have had great difficulty restoring central control of schools that achieved a degree of site-based management under Thomas. These schools possess their own identities, and older staff effectively socialize new additions into each school's culture. Parent groups buttress the schools against standardization, and the school board is reluctant to invest the funds necessary to rebuild a strong central office.

The story on Salt Lake City is incomplete—the central office may operate in a different fashion with several schools that did not establish strong patterns of site-based initiative before Thomas's departure. But the lesson—that a deliberate effort to weaken the central office staff can promote and protect site-based management—is clear.

### Sources of Help

Decentralization means that the people closest to a problem have the opportunity to solve it, but it should not assume that they will have the necessary knowledge and resources. Thus, schools must not be forced into a Faustian bargain to get help. They must be able to admit to needing assistance and request advice without reopening the doors to regulation.

The most straightforward way of meeting this requirement is to enable site-managed schools to buy the help they need on the open market. Schools that control their own budgets can allocate funds for

consultants, staff development, or new equipment. The school engages assistance from the outside on its own, rather than the experts', terms; schools requesting guidance need not confess failure or invite higher authorities to intervene in their operations.

Some supporters of site-based management believe, however, that independent consultants lack commitment to a school's long-term growth. They favor establishing long-term relationships between schools and service organizations. Such organizations can be managed by the school system, as is the case in Edmonton, or by independent nonprofit organizations, as is the case with the Gheens Professional Development Academy in Louisville.

Consultants and trainers from the central office work in the schools only on request. In Edmonton, schools may purchase consulting services from the "company store," a central office unit staffed by curriculum specialists. But schools may also choose to use the same funds to hire consultants on the open market. The school system offers its consultants at below-market prices, but it adjusts the size of its consultant staff to reflect the level of demand.

In other systems, notably Edmonton and Columbus, promoting the growth of school-level initiative is the primary job of regional assistant superintendents. These officials oversee the development of site-based management in their schools, intervene in conflict situations, and find technical assistance when needed. In Edmonton and Columbus, they have very small staffs; their offices are usually in school buildings, and they do not reproduce the administrative or regulatory structure of the central office.

These assistant superintendents are expected to build personal relationships with all principals and lead teachers in their schools and serve as advocates for them in dealing with the central office. Principals and central office staff told us of several cases in which unnecessarily restrictive general directives (or punitive compliance actions targeted at particular schools) were changed or eliminated through the efforts of a regional assistant superintendent.

As in any organizational arrangement, regional assistant superintendencies work better in some circumstances than others: Although some individuals reportedly have adopted controlling and punitive relationships toward their schools, most stick to the job of promoting, not eliminating, school-level initiative.

## TEACHERS' RESPONSIBILITY

Site management offers teachers the opportunity to take initiative and solve problems. But it imposes corresponding burdens. Like new parents, teachers in site-managed schools cannot give the baby back when it becomes troublesome. They must put in the time and endure the conflict and uncertainty that responsibility brings. Individually, teachers must brace for tough times; collectively, they must learn to avoid blaming all problems on some distant "they" in the central office.

In several districts, the teachers' unions were charter members of the coalition supporting site-based management. In those cases, the union tried to prepare its members to work with the superintendent to rescue site-based management in schools dominated by personality conflicts or labor-management tensions. This was the case in Dade County and Columbus. However, some union leaders, both locally and in national organizations, saw site-based management as a zero sum game between teachers and administrators. Some chose confrontation over collaboration, and to no one's surprise they soon encountered similar tactics from school administrators.

In Dade County, a deputy executive director of the teachers' union and an assistant superintendent from the school system's Bureau of Professionalization lead teams of administrators and union officials who visit schools and track the progress of site-based management. These teams intervene when they discover problems—a personality clash between the principal and influential teachers, an administrator or union steward who seeks confrontation rather than accommodation, or serious factional differences among teachers.

In some cases, these teams of administrators and unionists have settled conflicts through staff training or mediation; in other cases, the school system has replaced a principal, or the union has agreed to the transfer of a teacher. Such interventions are done quietly, without publicity or school board action. As a result, individual schools are helped toward site-based management, and the reputation of the broader decentralization movement is spared the consequences of public disputes.

This kind of assistance to the site-management process works only if the central school administration and the teachers' union are thoroughly committed to site-based management. Each side must be

more interested in promoting decentralization than in blaming the other for failures. A more public review and evaluation process would force the two sides into more adversarial positions.

In the long run, unions and central administrations may have to agree to more flexible methods than are now prevalent in public school systems for allocating staff among schools. As site-managed schools develop their own distinctive missions and approaches, each will require staff members whose teaching skills and style work compatibly with those of the existing program. If teachers continue to be assigned on the basis of seniority or other general criteria, staff assignment could become a serious barrier to the continuation of healthy site-managed schools.

A districtwide teacher labor market in which teachers and schools choose one another on the basis of affinity to school mission and culture is a logical consequence of site-based management. Marketlike allocation of teachers would not entirely bypass either the union or the central office. Both would have to agree on criteria for determining a teacher's qualifications to work in the district, on teacher pay scales, and on the rights of teachers who were not currently placed in a school.

A labor market would ultimately eliminate teachers' rights of tenure in a particular school. Such teachers would have to find schools to work in, but neither the union nor the central office could guarantee employment to teachers who could not find a school that wanted to hire them.

For teachers as well as for the board and superintendent, site-based management implies a commitment to support the development of effective schools one by one. That is not the same thing as a commitment to permit existing school staffs to work out their differences whatever the cost to school effectiveness. As we saw in many schools in all the districts we visited, if site-based management is mistakenly regarded as a commitment to the independence of individual teachers, many schools will be unable to change, hamstrung by irreconcilable internal differences.

Site management gives teachers and principals the opportunity to collaborate with their coworkers. It does not, however, convey to anyone, teacher or principal, the absolute right to work where and how one chooses.

## ASSISTANCE WITH DECISIONMAKING PROCESSES

The methods used by school systems to select schools for site-based management often send mixed messages. Though the initial publicity for a school system's site-management plan typically says that schools will become self-governing, the actual selection process imposes many constraints.

Applicant schools are required to describe the specific innovations they will implement; they are instructed that any necessary waivers of rules must be applied for individually. Teachers and principals are therefore often confused: Is site-based management a method only for implementing the innovations described in their application, or could it encompass broader questions? Is there any reason for a staff member who is indifferent to the projects described in the application to participate in shared decisionmaking? May decisions, once made, be implemented, or must they be checked with the central office?

These ambiguities can easily lead to strife and disillusionment at the school. As we saw in our fieldwork, staff members enthusiastic about site-based management soon find others with far lower expectations. Staff members responsible for existing programs often try to prevent any changes in their areas of responsibility. Because all preexisting responsibilities continue, staff who participate in shared decisionmaking experience a major increase in workload.

School staff may also be confused about their authority relationships with each other under site management. Must all initiatives taken by individual teachers be cleared with the site-management cabinet? Must teachers obey the leaders of the site-management team as they would the principal? Is the principal obligated to implement a site-management team's decision like a mandate from the central office? These issues are not easy to resolve. In particular, the boundaries between individual teacher's autonomy and collective decisionmaking can lead to time-consuming and painful conflicts.

### Procedures

Many school systems equate shared decisionmaking with formal processes—election of group representatives, voting on all decisions, and specific separation of powers. Some schools can make such processes work. But our fieldwork indicates that formal decisionmaking processes can disrupt existing labor-management collaboration,

impose high transactions costs, encourage the formation of artificial fringe groups, and ultimately cause the collapse of shared decision-making.

Some of the schools that we visited were paralyzed by their own decisionmaking processes. In one, staff were reluctant to make decisions until a properly constituted parent group could act, but so few parents felt strongly about school policies that the group could never assemble a quorum. In another, abstract discussions about whether the principal and the union steward had to have identical veto power dominated the shared decisionmaking agenda for months. In still another school, union and special-program representatives stimulated pressure from their central-office counterparts to block actions agreed to by the rest of the shared decisionmaking group.

In many schools, a formal rule of unanimity gave effective veto power on every issue to every group represented on the shared decisionmaking council (e.g., the principal, other administrators, classroom teachers, specialist teachers, parents, aides, custodians, and students). Under these circumstances, only trivial actions could be taken.

In these cases, and many others like them, shared decisionmaking was thwarted by formality. Some of the schools may have been so riven by conflict that no internal decisionmaking system could work. In most schools, although teachers and principals were reasonably well disposed to collaborate at the beginning, the process focused (and in some cases created) latent internal conflicts.

By contrast, some of the most ambitious site-based school improvement strategies occurred in schools where most issues were negotiated informally between the principal and lead teacher. Others, like a high school in Columbus and a middle school in Miami, had formal decisionmaking groups that met only to ratify decisions made by committees or individuals (including in some cases the principal) who were authorized to find solutions to specific problems.

School staffs should be free to choose highly formalized representational and decisionmaking processes. But school systems hoping to promote decentralized decisionmaking can help schools at the beginning by suggesting a range of possible shared decisionmaking models, including some that rely on channels of advice and consultation that may already exist in the school. Some principals and senior teachers have established healthy collaborations. If the school staff prefer to maintain those processes, they should be able to attain the freedom of

site-based management without assuming the additional burden of formalized decisionmaking.

The dangers of excessive formalization were evident in one school when the shared decisionmaking group sought to wrest control of curriculum issues that were being investigated by committees previously established by the principal. The majority of school staff members refused to accept the legitimacy of curriculum decisions made by the shared decisionmaking group, arguing that the principal's informal process was more effective and legitimate. The shared decisionmaking group was subsequently unable to define its scope of authority and disbanded.

Michael Kirst has identified the following four philosophies of school-level decisionmaking:[7]

1. Under the concept of the principal as a site manager, the principal controls school resources and is held accountable for the success of the school. This view of the principal as the site manager was reinforced by the school effectiveness literature's focus on strong site leadership.
2. Under the philosophy of lay control, parents control site policy because they are the consumers and care most deeply about policies at schools their children attend. Parent school-site councils deliberate and decide on school-level policy.
3. Under school-site policymaking by teachers, teachers form a school-site senate and allocate funds and personnel as well as decide instructional issues. School-site policymaking by teachers also enhances the professional image and self-concept of teachers.
4. Under a philosophy of parity, no one party should control the school entirely. Teachers, administration, and parents should have parity on a school-site council that reaches agreement through bargaining and coalitions. At the high school level, students may be included. All factions deserve a place at the table, and the best arguments should prevail.

As we have seen in our fieldwork, any of these philosophies can work at the school level. The parity model is attractive because it includes all involved interests; but it also imposes high costs of time and attention on parents. Likewise, teachers in a school may want to govern

[7]Michael Kirst, *Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers*, U.S. Department of Education, Report 1590–982, 1990.

themselves through formal processes, or they may prefer to follow the leadership of a trusted principal or a combination of the principal and union representative.

To give school communities choices among decisionmaking approaches, the board and superintendent could formulate one of the following alternative models:

- A cabinet system in which the principal consults informally with representatives of teachers, parents, and other interest groups but remains ultimately responsible for major policy decisions
- A coleader system in which the principal and an elected lead teacher may initiate any change in school policy that they can agree to
- A modified coleader system in which the principal and an elected teacher leader appoint staffwide task forces with authority to solve particular problems
- A formal constitutional decisionmaking process with elections, interest representation, decision by majority vote, and some veto powers for the principal
- A cabinet or coleader system with an elected principal subject to removal at any time by a majority vote of teachers, administrators, and parents.

This list of possibilities is not exhaustive. With such alternatives before them, however, a school staff may consider what fits them best before committing to site-based management. If school staff are to create a new culture of collaboration, they should be free to establish its basic terms. A single standard decisionmaking process for all schools once again gives the central office control, and it encourages the formality, not the substance, of collaboration.

### A Clear Role for the Principal

Principals in several school districts voiced a common fear, namely that shared decisionmaking would reduce their personal influence over school operations, while leaving them to shoulder the blame for negative outcomes. A few militant teachers noted complementarily that shared decisionmaking would force principals to do whatever was necessary to keep teachers happy.

These are minority views that do not reflect the intentions of school boards or teachers' unions in the school systems attempting site-based management. But they illustrate a problem endemic to the

decentralization of business: Middle managers remain critical to the success of the organization, but their roles must be drastically redefined.[8] As businesses in the United States and abroad have found, holding middle managers responsible for events they cannot control—an inherently inequitable arrangement—cannot be productive. By design, middle managers are caught between central office productivity demands and worker desires for the freedom to take the initiative.

Site-based management of schools cannot succeed if it treats principals unfairly. Teachers who believe that their principal must accommodate them are unlikely to enter productive collaborations. The only fair arrangement in site-based management is for the principal and teachers to be held jointly responsible, for both the genuineness of their collaboration and the effectiveness of the resulting school program. This can occur under any of the foregoing decisionmaking models. It requires only that everyone in the school accept responsibility for activities taken with their consent, tacit or explicit.

Such an arrangement already exists in private schools, where principals and teachers both stand to lose if parents consider the school strife-ridden or ineffective. Special-purpose public schools, including *magnets* formed for purposes of desegregation or to provide a specialized instructional approach, must often struggle to retain their independence and distinctive character; they frequently demonstrate a similar esprit de corps.[9]

A concept from parliamentary government applies here: The principal and teachers must feel collective responsibility for the school. Collective responsibility in a parliamentary system means that all members of a successful government have great freedom of action, but that all members of a disgraced government lose office. Collective responsibility in a site-managed school would mean that everyone, principal and teacher alike, believes the overall reputation of the school to be too valuable to risk in a ruinous conflict. Like cabinet colleagues, teachers and principals inevitably have disagreements. But all have strong incentives to accommodate each other rather than invite intervention by outsiders.

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[8]For a discussion of the sensitive position of middle managers in modern organizational reforms, see Gregory P. Shea, "Quality Circles: The Danger of Bottled Change," *Sloan Management Review*, Spring 1986, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 33–46.

[9]The term "magnet" refers to any special-purpose public school that students attend only by choice. For the purpose of this report, a public magnet is any school that must attract students by offering a distinctive program or climate. Though some such schools are established to create desegregated student bodies, they need not be.

Some site-managed schools that we visited lacked a sense of collective responsibility. Teachers and principals had disagreements in all schools. In some, the principal or teacher sought leverage by inviting intervention by, for example, the school board, teachers' union, or civil rights groups. But in the schools with collective responsibility, teachers and principals understood that the reputation of their site-management effort was too valuable to risk over victory on a particular issue.

Some school systems that we visited had informal arrangements to encourage accommodation. In Columbus, the superintendent and teachers' union head led a reform panel that privately reviewed all intraschool conflicts and pressed the competitors to settle with each other. Dade County's joint union-administration monitoring process sent a powerful message about accountability: Principals and teacher leaders were expected to work together to make site management work. Intransigent individuals, whether principals or teachers, came under strong informal pressure to change. School staff were accountable, under this informal system, to make site management work and to avoid dramatizing or exacerbating internal conflicts.

### The Role of Parents

Parent-staff relationships took many forms in the site-managed schools we visited. In most schools, parents formed an attentive and sometimes critical audience for staff performance. Few parent groups tried to assume day-to-day control of a school or exercise veto power over staff actions. Most sought to establish professional-client relationships with the school staff: They preferred to hold staff accountable, as they would other professional service providers whom they encountered, but not to dictate the terms of professional practice.[10]

Parent control of a school offers one possible, logical model of decisionmaking. But parent control is seldom stable, even in private schools. Parents have other responsibilities and naturally prefer to delegate responsibility for schooling to trustworthy professionals. Parents gain leverage from site-based management because they know that school staff are free to act: Staff cannot blame their inaction or ineffectiveness on distant bureaucrats or abstruse regulations and must therefore treat parent concerns seriously.

[10]Our sample did not include any of the Chicago schools controlled by popularly elected boards. Their experience, which should be clear by the end of the 1990–1991 school year, may provide a good test of this argument.

Nevertheless, efforts to control a school in detail do not increase parents' leverage in the long run. Parents or community members who seize operating control of a school have no one to hold accountable. If things do not work out, they have no one to blame but themselves and no alternative other than to flounder in search of something new to try. In a case of a failure of their own devising, parents and neighbors also have little grounds for demanding new help from the central office: They designed the failure and they might have to live with it.

On these grounds, we believe that most schools' site-management plans should be designed from the beginning to help parents hold professionals accountable, but not to control them. Though individual schools should be free to adopt what Kirst has called a parity model, central offices should avoid the rhetoric of power sharing, community control, bloc voting, and parent vetoes, in favor of an emphasis on consultation and accountability. Satisfying parents' concerns about their children is the first responsibility of a site-managed school staff. Establishing parents as a veto group, however, can politicize transactions between parents and staff and eliminate the staff's freedom to deal with parents on the basis of their children's individual needs.[11]

## Focusing Shared Decisionmaking on a Principle

In many schools, the first years of site-based management are dominated by contention about adult working conditions—labor management relations and fair allocation of parking spaces, telephones, and hall and playground duty—rather than by serious efforts to improve services to students. Preoccupation with adult work relationships

[11]Furthermore, in some of the schools that we visited, the parent community did not lend itself to organization, nor could it have reunited once factions developed. Though many schools have activist parents who seek influence in the school, those parents often have difficulty establishing that they represent strong or widely held parent views. Efforts to develop such mandates for parent leaders can create new divisions in the parent community; even worse, they can dramatize issues that later complicate parent-staff relationships. In one school that we studied, a survey asked parents to indicate whether they would like improvements in several areas of school policy. Though only a tiny fraction of parents returned the survey, those who did so indicated that they would like improvements in all the listed areas of school policy. The respondents did not, however, prioritize the list or suggest whether resources should be reallocated away from existing efforts. The resulting confusion about whether parents were dissatisfied across the board, and about where parent representatives should focus their attention, exacerbated parent-staff relationships and ultimately led the school to withdraw from the school system's site-based management initiative.

results naturally from releasing long pent-up tensions. But it also reflects the failure of school systems to provide a priori structures that will focus the attention of school staff on the need for comprehensive school improvement strategies.

School systems often select schools for site-based management on proposals that detail the new projects that the school will undertake, e.g., the addition of a new computer laboratory, the use of a new student assessment instrument, or the introduction of a second parent-teacher conference. This procedure establishes site-based management as another marginal addition to the existing school program, rather than as a framework for comprehensive self-assessment and renewal.

Some school system selection processes also emphasize the importance of unique or "leading edge" innovations. This encourages staffs to emphasize trendiness and connection to the most recent research literature. In the schools that we visited, these considerations drove out the more mundane issues of understanding the school's current failures and working to adapt the programs to the needs of current students.

A few school systems use a contrary approach, presenting site management as an opportunity for the principal and teachers to coalesce around a comprehensive vision of what the school might become.

- In Louisville, site-managed schools focus on one of several alternative comprehensive improvement approaches, such as the Coalition of Essential Schools.[12]
- In Indianapolis, site-managed elementary schools are built on the basic precepts of Ron Edmonds's *effective schools* model,[13] and secondary schools are organized according to the principles of the Middle Grades Achievement programs.
- In Dade County, the Saturn schools were built from scratch around a principal and lead teacher who had agreed in advance on the basic educational approach that would motivate the design of the building, selection of staff, and subsequent management of the instructional program.

[12]The Appendix provides a fuller description of Louisville's site-managed schools.

[13]Edmonds's improvement model is documented in Lawrence W. Lezotte and Barbara C. Jacoby, *A Guide to the School Improvement Process Based on Effective Schools Research*, Effective Schools Products, Okemos, Michigan, 1991.

- In California, schools must implement a comprehensive new curriculum, but they have substantial freedom about internal divisions of labor, scheduling, and methods of self-assessment.[14]

All schools developed on one such basic principle are not necessarily alike. Each school starts with a basic philosophy but adapts it to the needs of students, capabilities or staff, and other accidents of location, financing, and building capacity. This approach to developing self-managed schools is not new. Public magnet and vocational-technical schools are created to serve a specific purpose and implement a guiding mission or philosophy. Most private schools are similarly focused. As we have argued elsewhere, regular neighborhood public schools are the only ones in our educational system that are designed to be devoid of specific character.[15]

Schools with distinctive character are inevitably site-managed: By definition they do not fit a particular mold and cannot be controlled in detail by general rules. Most also have elements of shared decision-making, if only because the administration has invested time in finding appropriate faculty and dreads losing them. Such schools are democratic in the sense that administrators must consider the sentiments of faculty, parents, and supporters. Few, however, rely on elections or formal interest representation.

The self-governance of these distinctive schools is simplified by the fact that the school's mission and operating style are clear and easy for newcomers to understand: By joining the school, faculty and students implicitly accept its premises. The contract between the school and a new student or staff member is established through subscription to a clear set of principles rather than through ad hoc negotiations. Decisions are made day to day by open discussion and negotiation, but the prior agreement on principle sets boundaries for arguments and establishes the grounds for their resolution.[16]

The site-management movement gives superintendents and school boards a unique opportunity to develop schools with strong missions and internally coherent approaches to education. But these developments will not happen spontaneously. Schools will develop around particular philosophies only if the superintendent and school board

[14]Marshall S. Smith and Jennifer O'Day, "Systemic School Reform," to be published in *The Politics of Curriculum and Testing*, Susan Fuhrman and Betty Morley, eds., forthcoming, 1991.

[15]See Paul T. Hill, Gail E. Foster, and Tamar Gendler, *High Schools with Character*, RAND, R-3944-RC, August 1990.

[16]Ibid.

design it into their decentralization strategy. No one philosophy need be ordained in advance: The goal is to help schools develop their own guiding philosophies, not to manipulate school staffs into replicating a standard approach.

Based on the evidence from Louisville and from Miami's Saturn schools, the key elements of a successful decentralization strategy for site-based management include:

- A clear policy to encourage schools to adopt definite and internally coherent strategies of education.
- A set of alternative principles on which the staff of a potentially site-managed school may transform its program. These can be based on familiar and well-documented models, such as those provided by Comer, Edmonds, Goodlad, Hopfenberg, Levin, and Sizer.[17]
- An open invitation for applicants to develop their own basic approaches that differ from, but are similar in scope and intent, to the more familiar models.
- A clear intent to select schools for site management on the basis of their apparent ability to implement the principles they have chosen.

This strategy is easiest to implement for schools, like Dade's Saturn schools, that are being built from the ground up. Staff can be recruited according to their support for the school's underlying principle and their ability to fulfill its requirements. For existing schools, such a strategy implies an intensive process of consensus formation even before an application for site-managed status is made. As is evident in Louisville and at Grover Cleveland High School in New York City, staff members can develop such a consensus, especially when they understand that they will have the freedom to implement it.

[17]See James P. Comer, "Educating Poor Minority Children," *Scientific American*, Vol. 259, No. 5, November 1988; Ronald R. Edmonds, "Making Public Schools Effective," *Social Policy*, September-October 1981, pp. 56–60; John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1984, p. 229; Wendy S. Hopfenberg and Henry M. Levin, *Toward Accelerated Middle Schools*, Stanford University School of Education, Palo Alto, Calif., August 1990; Albert Shanker, "The End of the Traditional Model of Schooling—And a Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 71, No. 5, January 1990, pp. 344–357; and Theodore R. Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1984.

## COORDINATION AMONG DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS

As schools become increasingly distinctive, significant problems of articulation could arise. Students leaving an elementary school may find that the site-managed high school that they enter next has chosen an unfamiliar instructional approach and schedule. Conversely, teachers in a junior high school may find that students coming to them from various site-managed elementary schools know different things and are accustomed to being taught by diverse methods. Finally, students leaving one elementary school may find that the next one they enter emphasizes an entirely different sequence of instruction.

These potential problems are important, but they are not unique to site-based management. In centrally managed school systems, teachers in higher-level schools regularly complain that students are coming to them unprepared, and many students who transfer from one school to another find that student performance standards differ tremendously. In the typical centralized school system, schools are coordinated formally, by policy, not informally, by human interaction. As a result, staffs at the same level of schooling frequently do not talk to one another. If formal policy does not produce the desired standardization of student preparedness, teachers take the fact that some students are poorly prepared as yet another burden to be borne.

Site-based management virtually guarantees that students from different schools will have different experiences. Thus, it therefore emphasizes the preexisting problem of differences in source-school outcomes. If nothing is done to help reduce the effects of these differences in schools, the problem will come to be regarded as a major liability of site-based management.

In a system of site-managed schools, student preparedness could be coordinated, first, by standard competency-based examinations that would apply to transition between school levels and, second, through organized interaction among principals and teachers in a common feeder pattern. Many districts have developed such examinations, and more will do so under state accountability programs, such as those initiated by Maryland and New York. But only a few districts have developed forums for discussions between schools of instructional strategy and student preparedness.

Large Catholic diocesan educational systems include schools that follow a variety of basic philosophies and curricula. The central offices of such systems provide a testing program for all students seeking to

enter high school. On the basis of tests and assessments from feeder elementary schools, the staffs of secondary schools can anticipate the transition problems presented by a group of incoming students and prepare the necessary instruction to ensure that all students are prepared for their high school classes.

Catholic high schools admit students from many different grade schools, and their staffs expect to spend time bridging the differences among incoming students. Since Catholic high schools also admit many public elementary school graduates, the full range of student preparedness cannot be managed in advance by the diocesan system.

We saw three examples of cross-level coordination among site-managed public schools. In Edmonton, Columbus, and Prince William County, groups of elementary and secondary schools were supervised by assistant superintendents. Each assistant superintendent's job was to promote collaboration within the schools in his or her group, and to encourage dialogue about student preparedness. In Edmonton and Prince William County, the preparedness issue was seen as the assistant superintendent's main source of legitimacy for intervention into individual school affairs: If students from a particular school were regularly unprepared for the next school, or if a higher-level school made demands that students from none of its feeder schools could meet, the assistant superintendent pulled together the affected staffs and brokered discussions. In subsequent years, a school having trouble meeting the standards of others in its feeder pattern would be required to put that issue first among the list of problems to be solved by its site-management team.

Columbus created another incentive for communication between schools, i.e., the bartering of special resources. Within each "community of schools" (the cross-level group of schools supervised by an assistant superintendent), resources above the state-mandated minimum for each school are pooled and allocated among schools through negotiation.

At periodic meetings, a school needing a particular resource (a nurse, traveling art teacher, or a piece of equipment) can make its case to the whole group. This forces discussion of individual schools' plans and needs. Thanks to an implicit principle that each school will get approximately its pro rata share of the pooled resources, schools are encouraged to build support for their plans and to develop mutual confidence and support with other school staffs. The expectation, to be tested as the communities of schools are fully implemented in 1991, is that this forum will lead to greater communication among related schools.

Such mechanisms will not eliminate inconsistencies between schools' curricula and standards. But they can establish a pattern of communication and mutual adjustment that is now lacking in the centralized school systems. Neither standardization nor informal coordination can guarantee that students will have no difficulty moving from one school to another. As in so many areas, however, the performance of centralized school systems is poor enough that site management should not be held to an extremely high standard.

# 3. DECENTRALIZATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

According to policymakers, a significant feature of site-based management is the commitment to changing the locus of authority for key educational decisions, including curriculum, institutional strategies, and school organization and management. This shift of authority raises profound questions about who is in charge, how to govern public education, whose values will the schools reflect, and how to assess school performance, including student learning. Lorraine McDonnell has pointed out that the current state of research "is insufficient to establish a causal link—or even an empirical one in some cases—between these strategies [including site-based management] and student outcomes."[1]

These issues—governance, values, school performance, and student achievement—have traditionally come under the rubric of accountability in education. The issue of accountability in site-based schools can be reduced to a series of straightforward questions: Who is responsible to whom and for what? What mechanisms can an education community create to reconcile the demand for school-based initiative with the imperative for professional accountability to students, the public, and other educators in traditionally organized schools? How will educators, parents, and the public know if site-based management succeeds? These issues deserve debate within both the profession and the school governance structure because, if they are not resolved, site-based management cannot summon the public credibility essential to its success.

This section develops a working definition of accountability applicable to school and nonschool settings. It then examines accountability structures in other decentralized enterprises—business, politics, and the professions—to learn how these fields accommodate the conflict between encouraging the initiative of experts and satisfying the legitimate expectations of the people, i.e., clients, in whose interests they act.

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[1]Lorraine M. McDonnell, "Restructuring American Schools: The Promise and the Pitfalls," paper presented at a conference on education and the economy sponsored by the Institute on Education and the Economy, Brewster, Mass., September 1989.

## THE NATURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

*Accountability* describes a relationship between two parties in which four conditions apply: One party expects the other to perform a service or accomplish a goal; the party performing the activity accepts the legitimacy of the other's expectation; the party performing the activity derives some benefits from the relationship; and the party for whom the activity is performed has some capacity to affect the other's benefits.[2]

Accountability is the essence of a contractual relationship in which both parties have obligations and derive benefits. People can be accountable only if they feel bound by some agreement that establishes a fair exchange of benefits and obligations between two parties.

In centralized organizations, accountability is defined entirely in terms of quotas, regulations, and procedures. Individuals are hired to exercise routines and are rewarded through salary structures and job security. In decentralized organizations, accountability is defined in terms of broad corporate goals, and performance is rewarded with greater independence. Behavior is constrained by corporate values and culture, but not controlled in detail.

The transition from a centralized to a decentralized organization involves changes in accountability. Though some reporting relationships must remain standardized (e.g., accounting and methods of reporting to tax-collection agencies), local units gain independence by demonstrating that they can use discretion to further the organization's broader goals and by building alliances with outsiders whose support benefits the entire organization, e.g., customers, suppliers, and financial supporters.

Central corporate leadership still monitors local performance, but it does not prescribe methods or set production quotas arbitrarily. It encourages local units to adapt to local conditions by considering those same conditions in evaluating local performance.

When organizations decentralize, local office staff gain freedom to initiate actions and set priorities, but they do not receive total autonomy. Local units can no longer justify their actions in terms of unavoidable mandates, and they cannot escape responsibility for poor performance by claiming that they have followed all the procedures

[2]A good source of definitions is Bruce L. R. Smith and D. C. Hague, eds., *The Dilemma of Accountability in Modern Government: Independence Versus Control*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1971.

mandated by higher authorities. Chief executives, board members, and central office staff lose the ability to micromanage local units, but they hope to gain better performance in return.

Both sides take risks: Central leaders accept the risk that some independent local units will fail, and members of local units accept the risk that the performance will fall short of expectations and that they will be replaced or subjected to new regulations. In stable and productive decentralized organizations, all parties have found ways to live with their own risks and maintain the trust and confidence of others.

## DECENTRALIZATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN BUSINESS

Although the problems of accountability in decentralized organizations are new to public schools, they are not unprecedented in other settings. Businesses have struggled with the problems of the trade-offs between corporate standardization and local initiative for years. Elected officials must balance competing demands as they try both to satisfy local constituents and to respond to national needs. Traditional professions, such as law and medicine, have had to create a model of accountability in which individual initiative operates within the boundaries of professional norms.

Not all of the lessons from these settings apply to schools and teaching. However, other fields provide a starting point for an examination of decentralization and accountability in site-managed schools.

### Increasing Productivity and Profit

The same concerns that animate education reform motivated the movement toward greater employee participation in business: Workers in centralized organizations were perceived as unimaginative, unlikely to do more than just follow the rules, unconcerned about the quality of their product, and indifferent to whether the larger organization met its objectives. Two recent issues of the *Harvard Business Review* offer vivid examples of how worker participation is expected to increase productivity and profit, e.g., by:

- Permitting employees to invest some of their own knowledge and thinking into the work

- Inducing a sense of responsibility for the quality of work done
- Making evident the interdependencies among workers to encourage team spirit and the resolution of inconsistencies in method, schedule, and product by the parties involved
- Eliminating unrealistic proxies for performance, including arbitrary work quotas produced by corporate managers unfamiliar with real local market conditions
- Clarifying the relationship between a worker's or group's product and the overall success or failure of the whole enterprise
- Giving workers incentives to demand high performance of each other.[3]

Business leaders who adopted these objectives believed them unattainable under traditional centralized structures. Those who attempted decentralization had no assurance that it would produce the anticipated benefits. In fact, they found both decentralization and its benefits difficult to achieve. Top management had to adjust its own modes of operation and induce workers to overcome ingrained habits. Most of the instincts bred into top officials, line managers, and workers run against the grain of decentralization.

The following excerpts from a case account by the chief executive officer (CEO) of a sausage factory that tried to improve performance through participation, make these points vividly:[4]

> Acting on instinct I ordered a change: "From now on," I announced to my management team, "you're all responsible for making your own decisions." I went from authoritarian control to authoritarian abdication.
>
> I really didn't want them to make decisions. I wanted them to make the decisions I would have made.
>
> I couldn't give responsibility. People had to expect it, want it, even demand it. . . . The goal was not so much a state of shared responsibility as an environment where people insist on being responsible.

[3]See Janice A. Klein, "The Human Costs of Manufacturing Reform," *Harvard Business Review*, March–April 1989, pp. 60–66; see also in the July–August 1990 issue: Harold Sirkin and George Stalk, Jr., "Fix the Process, Not the Problem," pp. 26–35; Joseph L. Bower, "Business and Battles: Lessons in Defeat," pp. 48–53; William Wiggenhorn, "Motorola U: When Training Becomes an Education," pp. 71–83; Ernest M. Von Simson, "The Centrally Decentralized *Is* Organization," pp. 158–161; G. Bennett Stewart III, "Remaking the Public Corporation from Within," pp. 126–135; and Alan M. Webber, "Consensus, Continuity, and Common Sense," pp. 114–125.

[4]Ralph Stayer, "How I Learned to Let My Workers Lead," *Harvard Business Review*, November–December 1990.

> One day it struck me that by checking the product, top management had assumed responsibility for its quality. We were not encouraging people to be responsible for their own performance. . . . On the theory that those who implement a decision are the best people to make it, we changed our quality control system. Top management stopped tasting sausage and the people who made sausage started. We informed line workers that from now on it would be their responsibility to make certain that only top-quality product left the plant.
>
> No sooner had the team leaders been appointed than they began to function as supervisors. In other words, they immediately fell into the familiar roles they had always seen.
>
> [W]hen people on the shop floor began to complain about fellow workers whose performance was still slipshod and indifferent . . . they came to top management and said . . . "It's your job either to fix them or fire them. . . ." We asked ourselves who was in the best position to own this problem and came to the obvious conclusion that the people on the shop floor knew more about shop floor performance than we did, so they were the best ones to make these decisions.
>
> We insisted that since they were the production performance experts it was up to them to deal with the situation. I bit my tongue time and time again but they took on the responsibility for dealing with performance problems and actually fired individuals who wouldn't perform up to the standards of their teams.

These problems are being solved one by one by businesses that are decentralizing and encouraging worker participation. But the outcomes are not uniform. Further, managers are often surprised at the high costs of team coordination and negotiation, and must ultimately set firmer boundaries on participation than originally intended.

As Janice Klein has found in a series of studies of participatory management, workers are often disappointed by the degree of flexibility they gain: One unit's products are another's inputs, so no one group can change its methods, product, or schedule without considering the consequences for other units. Such natural task interdependencies create reciprocal accountability and limit everyone's ability to make unilateral changes in schedules or work methods.[5]

Even if the leaders and line workers are committed to decentralization, several barriers remain. Headquarters staff, who have made careers controlling activity in the field, are understandably reluctant to abandon their familiar functions. Persons in working groups who have succeeded in the past by rigorous compliance with policy may

[5]See Klein, op cit.; also Janice A. Klein, "A Reexamination of Autonomy in Light of New Manufacturing Practices," *Human Relations*, Vol. 44, No. 1, January 1991, pp. 21–38, and "Driving Decisions Down," *Executive Excellence*, March 1990, pp. 14–15.

not welcome the added work of devising fresh solutions to problems or negotiating with others. Even working group members who welcome greater responsibility might fear that decentralization will prove to be a brief episode in the organization's life, and that zealots ultimately will be punished. Finally, staff members in local or specialized units may have lived so long under central control that they are unable to perform well in a freer environment.

### The Need to Change Corporate Culture

These barriers are not created by the boxes and lines in organization charts, but by corporate culture. They pervade everyone's working assumptions, and a simple edict or an exhortation will not change them. Business leaders seeking to decentralize their companies speak of the need to change culture, not just at the level of the local unit that is expected to take greater initiative, but in corporate headquarters and other regional administrative units. Such changes require a great deal of time and the constant attention of top management.

Corporate leaders who want their workers to take initiative and solve problems must ensure that working groups avoid the following three kinds of failures endemic to decentralized organizations:

- Conservatism—individual workers or working groups unaccustomed to acting on their own initiative can become highly risk-averse and even less imaginative than they were before decentralization.
- Laxity—individuals or groups may accept low levels of performance from themselves and thus threaten the larger organization's success.
- Reregulation—even when CEOs are committed to decentralization, head office bureaucrats may seize on local problems or failures as an excuse to reintroduce the very centralization that the corporate leaders are trying to eliminate.

### Implications for Schools

These problems have their close analogs in education. When schools gain the freedom to manage themselves, principals and teachers may become risk-averse and preoccupied with minutiae. School staffs might demand even less of themselves than they produced under

centralization, thus shortchanging the children whom they teach and the broader community supporting the schools. Finally, deficient performance in some schools could discredit the school system as a whole or create demands for reregulation of all schools, including those that are doing well.

The success of decentralization in any field depends on the resolution of these problems. To whom is the local operating unit to answer, and for what? How can a local school learn to do its job effectively without constant recourse to central office direction? How can teachers obtain the benefits of professional participation without huge added costs in time spent planning, negotiating, and coordinating? Can the staff members adapt to their new responsibilities or must they be retrained or replaced? How can the school district policymakers promote high levels of local unit performance without reregulating and recentralizing key decisions?

The business analogy shows that school systems are not alone in facing the conflict between the need to increase local units' freedom and the need to ensure that all activity supports broader corporate goals. In both kinds of organizations, the interdependence of working groups constrains independence, quite apart from any actions by central authorities.

Finally, both schools and businesses must find ways to capitalize on workers' expertise and let them "taste the sausage." Schools, like corporations, must change their culture so that those at the working level can take real responsibility for their products, without creating unnecessarily costly interunit coordination and negotiation.

## ACCOUNTABILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

In public affairs, the meaning of accountability returns to its original roots in democratic politics—a relationship of trust and reciprocal dependence between officials who serve at the pleasure of a constituency and the people whose interests they serve. The central issue in democratic accountability is the following: How can an elected official, who must make many decisions on a broad range of problems, be accountable to voters, who are presented with only one choice, at widely spaced intervals, namely to support one or another candidate for office?

## Reciprocal Obligations

The key to the accountability of elected officials is the mutual dependence between them and their constituencies. Both parties in the relationship hold stakes in the other's success: If the elected official performs well, his constituents will be safe, prosperous, and protected from arbitrary government action; if constituents feel prosperous and safe, they will sustain the official in office.

Candidates for elective office must convince voters that they will act in the voters' interests. Though "single issue" candidacies are possible, single issue incumbencies are rare. Once elected, officials must deal with the entire range of public business that comes before them. Many of the issues that the official will have to decide may not have been debated in the last election, and the voters who agreed with one another on the desirability of electing the official may be deeply divided on the issue at hand. The elected official has a strong incentive to maintain voters' confidence, but the most recent election may provide few clues about how to do so.

Electoral defeat is the ultimate sanction for failure, but accountability is not limited to an occasional election. It is a continuous process—one that operates informally through personal visits, correspondence, and opinion polls. Constituents can influence their representatives by threatening to vote for others or by giving or withholding campaign contributions. Elected officials can also influence their constituents' expectations by reporting progress, explaining the significance of events beyond elected officials' control, and calling attention to competing demands on public resources.

As this was written, President Bush had successfully led the nation into war in the Persian Gulf. He was not elected on the issue of peace or war in the Middle East, nor did he deploy troops to Saudi Arabia because opinion polls told him to do so. To the contrary, he led the nation toward acceptance of an entirely new policy, using a combination of persuasion and executive fait accompli. Bush's leadership in this case overwhelmed opposition from other elected officials in Congress and generated an unprecedented level of support for his actions.

In such a situation, what is the meaning of democratic accountability?[6] It surely does not mean that President Bush could act only on

[6]McDonnell and Guttman use the term "democratic accountability" to mean that the citizenry and its elected representatives have a right to control such institutions as public schools. Our concept of political accountability is consistent with this, but

an explicit mandate from the voters. Nor does it mean that voters (or even their directly elected representatives, the members of Congress) should control the details of operations initiated by the President. It does not even mean that he would be defeated for reelection had his policy failed. Democratic accountability does mean, however, that the President had to work to maintain the confidence of a majority of voters and the support of a large majority of members of Congress.

### Implications for Schools

As site-based management gives teachers and principals greater initiative over the operation of schools, the nature of their accountability changes. They become less like bureaucrats in a hierarchical organization and more like political leaders. As bureaucrats, they were accountable to higher-ranking bureaucrats, and the basis of accountability was compliance with policies. As initiative-taking operators, they are accountable to multiple constituencies—higher officials, parents, and the public—and the basis of accountability is confidence. Different constituencies each have their hopes for what the school will do, and they have a reciprocal obligation to support the schools. But their ultimate judgments about a school's performance are not completely predictable in advance.

Like elected officials, the staff of site-managed schools must convince their various constituencies that they are, on balance, operating in their public's interests. All constituencies need to understand why the school chooses to provide the services it does, and to believe that students benefit. But, like political leaders, school staff can actively justify actions taken and develop expectations for results.

In a political relationship, all parties depend on each other. Similarly, under site-based management the superintendent and school board depend on school staffs to run the school effectively, and the school staff depends on the central office for a reliable flow of funds,

broader. It acknowledges that constituents have a right to expect officials to fulfill their promises, but also recognizes that public officials are more than faithful executors of their constituents' expressed preferences. Officials can lead by constructing expectations, creating alternatives that were not recognized in prior debate, and by redirecting constituents' attention to new problems. Citizens ultimately control public officials, but the mechanisms of control are highly complex and unpredictable. Officials dare not act in ways that their constituents will not support. But they must marshal support for lines of action that constituents themselves may not have considered. See Lorraine M. McDonnell, *Accountability and School Restructuring*, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, 1990, and Amy Guttman, *Democratic Education*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1987.

staff, and equipment. Parents and neighbors depend on the staff to educate students in ways the community finds acceptable, and staff depend on the community to send children to school, to reinforce lessons at home, and to support the staff against arbitrary actions by the central office. The superintendent and board are also, of course, responsible to voters, for guiding the schools, providing resources, removing barriers, and enabling the schools to function effectively.

The political analogy shows that accountability is a relationship of reciprocal dependence, not a one-way imposition of demands on dependent subordinates. The schools must meet public expectations, but the public and its representatives must support the schools so as to improve their performance. This is a continuous, rather than episodic, process.

Even if the accountability climaxes in specific formal activities (e.g., elections or publication of test scores), the process goes on all the time. School staff who want to maintain the confidence of the central office, parents, and other professionals must continually work at both demonstrating their performance and constructing constituents' expectations for the future.

Finally, the political analogy shows that those who are being held accountable can take some initiative in defining the expectations against which they will be judged. Those who mold others' expectations have a better chance of retaining their independence than those who wait passively for others to construct criteria and draw conclusions.

## PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Some teacher activists advocate a movement toward professional autonomy for teachers. This is an understandable vision for people who think that teacher effectiveness is impaired by rules, close monitoring, and paperwork. But professionals are not autonomous; they are, in fact, accountable in different ways to different audiences.

### Norms and Individual Responsibility

Physicians and lawyers, the most advanced and emulated groups of professionals, have considerable freedom to set their hours of work, decide what problems they will work on, and choose their own methods. But they are strongly guided by the norms of their own

profession, by their colleagues' need to safeguard the standards and reputation of the profession, and by their clients' ability to complain about and earn compensation for inadequate practice. As teaching becomes more professional, individuals will bear heavier, not lighter, burdens of individual responsibility.

In late twentieth-century America, the professional leads a remarkably complex working life. Physicians, in particular, face governmental pressure to hold down service costs, increased scrutiny of their use of risky and costly procedures, significant risk of malpractice litigation, and consequent high costs of personal insurance. They are also held to standards of service that do not take account of such factors as personal satisfaction, fatigue, and overcommitment. They can restrict their own caseloads, but they cannot deny service to a patient who needs it just because their normal working hours are over.

Not all physicians, of course, can live up to these high expectations. But none can expect to keep license, reputation, or practice long if he takes the attitude so often expressed by teachers in public schools, i.e., "I get paid whether you [students] learn this or not."

Bureaucratic accountability is a relationship with higher authority based on adherence to rules. Political accountability is a relationship basesd on reciprocal obligations. But professional accountability is entirely different. It has three main features:

- First, professionals take the initiative in determining what services their clients need and how best to deliver them.

Professionals identify and analyze their clients' needs and either perform necessary services or find others better qualified than themselves to perform such services. When professionals offer to perform services themselves, they also take the initiative in defining the standards by which their services should be judged: Physicians must inform their patients of the risks of medical procedures and attorneys must give their clients realistic assessments of the chances for success in legal actions.

- Second, professionals are accountable to one another.

Professionals performing interdependent tasks (e.g., a surgeon and an anesthesiologist) answer to one another for performance. They are also responsible to the profession as a whole, both to perform to high standards and to identify and correct deficient performance in others.

- Third, professionals are responsible for balancing the different needs and expectations of the higher authorities, peers, and clients to whom they are accountable.

They are not free to take a passive approach to their environment, but must find ways of overcoming barriers to effective client service. And they cannot cite the press of other business as an excuse for neglecting a client.

Professionals, therefore, are accountable in three directions: *upward* to higher authorities (e.g., licensing boards and the courts), *laterally* to peers (other professionals who refer clients, offer partnerships, and determine who can practice at a particular place), and *downward* to clients (who can be loyal, withdraw their patronage, or sue for negligence).

### Implications for Schools

Site-based management makes school staff accountable as professionals. They assume an obligation to take the initiative in assessing the needs of their students, devising appropriate services, and constructing realistic expectations for success. They also assume a responsibility to put the performance of the whole profession and the interests of students ahead of their personal relationships with other teachers.

School staff remain accountable upward, to the school board and central administration. They must also account downward to parents, students, and community members, and laterally to one another and to the staffs of other schools to which their students will someday graduate. Because these accountability demands can lead to conflict, school staff are also responsible for reconciling and trading off among their obligations to various parties: As professionals, they are relied upon to balance competing considerations, not to wait passively for orders, and they cannot expect all parties to praise their performance at all times.

The professional analogy shows that the price of freedom is a new set of obligations, to take responsibility for their performance as individuals and for the performance of the school as a whole, and to consult with and anticipate the reactions of diverse constituencies. For most schools, these will include parents, broadly based educational reform coalitions, private review and accreditation groups, and other schools in their feeder patterns, as well as state and local education agencies.

## THE LIMITS OF ANALOGY

The foregoing analogies are imperfect: Schools are not businesses. Few schools outside Chicago and Los Angeles are directly controlled through an electoral process. Teachers are not independent profit-seeking professionals. But the three analogies provide a number of insights into the problems of accountability in site-managed schools.

Decentralization attempts to create a balanced accountability relationship in which school staff have control over their own activities and therefore feel responsible for the results. Central authorities, on their part, give up the effort to micromanage schools and promise to provide the conditions in which school staff can succeed, in return for the right to hold school staffs responsible for the results.

Site-managed schools, like the operating units of other decentralized organizations, gain freedom to initiate actions and set priorities, but they do not gain total autonomy. Local units can no longer justify their actions in terms of unavoidable mandates, and they cannot escape responsibility for poor performance by claiming that they have followed all the procedures mandated by higher authorities.

In decentralized organizations, most people exist in a complex web of dependency, responsibility, and accountability relationships. All elements of an organization depend in some ways on the performance of all others, and all have methods, whether formal or informal, aboveboard or covert, of holding the others accountable. Accountability is, in sum, a two-way street.

Educators have come to equate accountability with centrally administered performance measurements and associated rewards and punishments. The real accountability relationships in education, however, are at least as complex and multidirectional as those in business, politics, and the professions. With the exception of the youngest children, all the actors in a school system have some capacity to hold one another accountable.

Student absenteeism can be seen as a way students hold their teachers accountable. When school boards renege on promises of funds, scapegoat teachers, or micromanage schools, teachers respond by "going through the motions," or "working to rule." The fact that the formal accountability system does not recognize the complex reciprocity of these relationships can lead some actors to hold others accountable in destructive ways.

The motivations for site-based management can easily be expressed in these terms. When schools are centrally controlled, teachers and principals are praised or blamed for student performance but believe they do not have the freedom necessary to act effectively. Higher officials depend on the performance of school staffs, but the general policies that they can enact and the rewards and punishments they can mete out do not suffice to bring about good performance.

In urban school systems with many low-performing schools, accountability is often a charade. School board members and superintendents cannot close dozens of schools or replace hundreds of teachers and principals. They therefore resort to denunciation and pressure, neither of which imposes material sanctions on low-performing schools, but both of which damage the overall reputation of the school systems and further lower staff morale.

# 4. SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the clearest messages from our fieldwork was that site-based management requires changes in accountability. The "fragmented centralization" that site-based management is meant to reverse makes school staff beholden to the uncoordinated demands of separate central office units.

The problem of accountability arises particularly in major urban areas, where school system central offices are large and formally organized, and schools receive funds from multiple federal, state, and private sources. Such schools lack internal coherence because they are accountable piecemeal to the separate demands of federal and state program coordinators, curriculum supervisors, testing units, personnel evaluation processes, staff development specialists, financial auditors, and union leaders.

In a decentralized school system, school staff are responsible for identifying the needs of students and judging the efficacy of their own methods. Quality control in business—"tasting the sausage"—is not someone else's job. In schools it belongs to the teachers and administrators who deal with students directly. They must ultimately convince others—supervisors, peers, and clients—that the product is good. If the professionals know their jobs and take quality seriously, others' approval should not be difficult to obtain.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN SITE-MANAGED SCHOOLS

Accountability is the basic activity by which site-managed schools define their missions and assert the grounds on which they can be trusted with the welfare of children. It consists in providing clear answers to questions such as:

- What do the children in this school need?
- What educational strategy is most appropriate for the students in this school?
- By what line of action should the school implement that strategy?

- How can the school overcome the resource limitations (including limitations of staff motivation and capability) that would interfere with the strategy?
- What results does the school expect?
- How will the school know if the strategy is working?
- What will the school do if the strategy proves impossible to implement or less effective than hoped?

Accountability starts at home, with a clear vision of the school's identity and the experiences that it intends to provide children, and with a determination to maintain those qualities through close internal monitoring of processes and student outcomes. The methods and content of school staffs' reports to such constituencies as parents, neighbors, the school board, and other educators must be tailored, as opposed to standardized.

Accountability mechanisms must reflect each school's particular objectives and strategies, rather than cost, ready availability, familiarity, or psychometric tastes. Further, given the heavy time burdens that site-based management imposes, accountability mechanisms must be simple and impose low net costs.

The workload of schools sets boundaries on the development of new accountability relationships. The fact that school staff members have limited numbers of work hours, and most of those are dedicated to direct student contact, means that the school has a finite amount of time available for self-assessment and performance demonstration to external audiences.

Discussions with teachers and principals have led us to appreciate the difficulty school staff have in devising original instruments to measure the outcomes of their efforts, and the crippling time demands that a formal accountability process can impose on an already burdened staff. For accountability mechanisms to work within the strict limits of staff time and expertise, they must:

- Tie in with the school's specific mission and identity and provide a factual foundation for the school's reputation with parents, other educators, the superintendent, and the school board. Piecemeal accountability methods—which force a school to attend separately to the demands of separate central office bureaucracies—destroy the school's focus and complicate both the school's effort to project a specific image and the assessment of its performance by others.

- Treat accountability as an integral part of the school's strategic planning process, not as a separate specialized function.
- Encourage frequent communication between staff and parents and neighbors, both on the progress of individual children and on the school's overall performance.
- Rely on informal assessments and expert judgments as the main methods of evaluating unique aspects of the school program.
- Rely on the central office as a source of information about the school's circumstances and performance relative to other schools and broader norms.
- Otherwise, rely on formal outcome measurements only when the school system central office can supply instruments and data that unambiguously fit the school program.

Few school systems that we visited had developed accountability methods that fully met these requirements. Most nominally site-managed schools were still beholden to many separate central office units, and accountability was still seen as the sole responsibility of a specialized central testing office.

Some approaches, however, might provide the foundation for accountability methods that are appropriate for site-managed schools. They include, first, treating site-managed schools as magnets, the survival of which depends on their reputations and ability to attract students; second, open public consultation and review of site-managed schools' annual plans; and third, central office publication of data specially collected and analyzed for each school.

## MAGNET-STYLE ACCOUNTABILITY

Among the site-managed schools in the districts that we visited, only the special-purpose schools, designed to attract students by offering special curricula or preparation, had developed their own accountability methods. These magnet schools met community demands for distinctive schooling, and though most were racially integrated, desegregation was not their main purpose.

The staffs of these schools understood that they needed to demonstrate performance to at least two audiences: the guidance counselors and parents who determine whether an individual student will be encouraged to attend the school and the external groups that value the school and would support it against efforts by the central office to regulate or eliminate its special character.

Teachers and principals of the magnet schools knew that the central office would monitor their students' test scores. But they did not consider test scores critical because they were confident of producing better than average results. Moreover, they knew that the constituencies that supported the special school—businesses that expected to hire the graduates, parents, foundations that supported special programs, and education researchers who admired the program—would protect it from reregulation. Therefore they cultivated their immediate constituencies, assuming that they could relatively easily manage central office relationships.

Magnet school teachers and principals are most concerned about student dropouts, attendance, graduation, and postgraduation placements because they directly affect parents' and supporters' satisfaction. To the extent that student test scores affected these outcomes, staff were concerned about them. But most used test scores as advance indicators of the outcomes that their constituencies valued.

For these reasons, magnet school staffs were concerned about their reputations among other educators. They took the initiative in establishing lateral accountability relationships. Magnet high school principals, for example, had to convince junior high school counselors and teachers of the effectiveness of magnet-school programs and of the reward to students of obtaining admission, traveling out of neighborhood, and meeting demanding course requirements. They had to convince employers and postsecondary admissions officers that their students were prepared to succeed without any heroic remedial efforts by the receiving institution.

The magnet school staffs kept close contact with all their external constituencies, trading on good news whenever possible and trying to hide or explain failures. But they understood that public relations were secondary to performance. Such schools therefore learned the importance of candor about individual students' preparation, openly appraising the success of their own programs and initiating improvements in areas where performance fell short.

## CHOICE

As schools come to live on their reputations, parent and student enrollment decisions become the principal method of accountability. Choice provides a comprehensive framework for upward, downward, and lateral accountability. If parents are free to move among schools, demand is a good indicator of a school's appeal and quality.

The superintendent and board can monitor patterns of demand to identify schools needing improvement and highly successful approaches that should be replicated. Parents, free to move from less to more adequate schools, can operate as consumers searching among available alternatives, rather than as captive clients who must struggle to improve the schools to which they are assigned.

Lateral accountability among educators is maintained through natural processes, e.g., teachers' recommendations that students apply to some schools and avoid others and principals' eagerness or reluctance to admit students from particular schools. Some consider a choice system to be entirely self-governing.[1] Others argue that school system central offices must continue to make independent assessments of school quality and outcomes and intervene to improve substandard schools.[2]

None of the districts that we studied included choice or open enrollment as an element of its site-based management reforms. But many central office, union, and school-level leaders acknowledged that choice is a logical consequence of site-based management. As schools develop their individual identities, parents will have increasingly good reasons to want to choose.

Further, as argued elsewhere, choice can make a positive contribution to a school's development of its own specific character and strategy.[3] Staff members and parents who find that a school is developing in ways they do not like can choose to leave for more congenial settings, rather than staying on to obstruct the efforts of the majority.

A common method of political empowerment provides parents with formal decisionmaking authority over schools to which their children are assigned. The political approach requires parents to be highly articulate, energetic, and politically competent. But not all parents are good at defining issues or representing the interests of others. Parents are, moreover, always at a disadvantage when sharing responsibility with professional staff members, as parents have fewer hours than staff to work on school matters.

[1]See, for example, John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1990.

[2]See Richard F. Elmore, *Choice in Public Education*, RAND, JNE-01, 1986. See also Paul T. Hill, Gail E. Foster, and Tamar Gendler, *High Schools with Character*, RAND, R-3944-RC, August 1990.

[3]See Hill et al., 1990.

Choice lets parents act individually rather than through complex processes of interest accommodation and arbitrage. It may be the most accurate and efficient downward accountability mechanism for schools.[4]

## OPEN CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOL PLAN

Whether or not parents are able to choose among schools, the process of creating and implementing a school plan may also serve as the basis of accountability. It can provide forums for otherwise reticent groups, particularly parents and neighbors, to consider school performance and express their own sense of needs and priorities.

All site-managed schools in the districts that we studied had written descriptions of their operating plans. Most such documents described the instructional innovations that the school staff intended to make, the methods whereby staff and parental advice would be solicited and decisions made, and the implications of the school's budget.

These plans were originally intended to communicate with the central office. School staffs described their intended decisionmaking processes, showed how they would meet applicable mandates, asked for necessary waivers of regulations and contracts, and proposed uses of any grant funds that were available to facilitate the transition to site-based management.

In many instances, these plans were little more than pro forma packages of routine assurances. They revealed little about whether the school staff had coalesced around specific goals or had simply divided turf along traditional lines. They were filed in the central office to be seriously analyzed only if something went wrong in the school.

In some schools, however, the school-site plan became the basis of a school's downward and lateral, as well as upward, accountability. To serve these purposes, the school treated the plan as a living

[4]Chubb and Moe, 1990, offer this argument. In general, Hirschman's discussion of exit, voice, and loyalty applies perfectly to problems of downward accountability. See Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms and Organizations*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969. Parents and neighbors can hold schools accountable by leaving them, by demanding changes without threatening to leave, or by joining with staff in a common effort to improve conditions. As reported in Hill et al., 1990, parental choice does not mean that parents will abandon voice and loyalty in favor of exit: In many private schools, parents deal with the schools as their partner who deserves loyalty but responds swiftly to reasonable requests. The exit option is seldom used, but it gives special leverage to parents' use of voice and loyalty.

document, openly discussing and revisiting it throughout the school year.[5]

In some schools, baseline information supplied by the central office was shared with parents and reviewed in light of plans and expectations established in the previous year. The draft plan itself, which was usually written in the late spring for the subsequent year, was discussed in open meetings before it was formally submitted to the central office. In some cases, parents and interested neighbors accompanied the school staff to the central office for meetings in which the plan was reviewed by the superintendent and school board.

Throughout the subsequent school year, the principal and lead teachers made periodic (e.g., quarterly) progress reports to the faculty and parents. All such reports were stated in terms of the goals and expectations established by the plan. Likewise, any midyear changes in the school program (e.g., assignment of new staff, adjustment of budget reductions, or initiation of new programs) were explained in light of their implications for the plan.

If so used at the site level, an annual plan can integrate the functions of upward, downward, and lateral accountability. It becomes the vehicle for a strategic planning process in which all interested parties are involved and informed. Accountability is then an everyday concern of the entire school community, not a specialized function delegated to an individual or performed at a particular time of the year.

Most plans in most public organizations are written, shelved, and forgotten. In the schools that we visited, three differences distinguished a living document that focused a continuous strategic planning process from a dead plan. First, a living plan was based on school-specific baseline data and formulated to address needs and problems revealed by those data. Second, the plan was openly discussed and approved by the school's main constituencies. Third, the plan was revisited throughout the year.

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[5]Open public discussion is essential. As discussed above, a school cannot know whether parent representatives, either elected or appointed, fully represent the range of parent concerns. Similarly, a parent representative's approval of the plan does not guarantee that it will address the concerns of all parents. Schools can and should develop plans in collaboration with parent representatives. But plans become true downward accountability devices only if they can be broadly discussed among all interested parents.

**Use of Baseline Data**

School baseline data can give staff members a rich and accurate picture of the children they serve, helping to focus their deliberations on substantive educational issues, rather than on the adult, interpersonal, and labor management issues that dominate the agendas of many site-managed schools. Standard baseline data can also establish common ground for accountability discussions among school staff, parents and neighbors, the central office, and the broader community.

In Edmonton, Columbus, and Prince William County, the school system provides an annual statistical profile of each school. Although its exact content varies from place to place, the profiles normally include the following information:

- Racial composition of staff and student body
- Recent changes in student demographics
- Size and recent growth in the limited English proficiency (LEP) population
- Number of special-education students
- Teacher qualifications and experience
- Student and teacher absenteeism and turnover rates
- Physical condition of the school
- Percentage of students on free or reduced-cost lunch
- Categorical programs available
- Student health data
- Test scores, by race and language group
- Parent involvement methods and proportion participating.

In some cases, these data are compared with districtwide averages.

Baseline data serve the accountability process in two ways. First, they inform the school staff's own assessments of student needs and the match between needs and current programs. Second, they help discipline the discussions among school staff, parents, and the broader community. The latter function is a distinct service to school staff. Parents and community members, like educators, may take a self-interested piecemeal approach to school policymaking, make particularistic demands, or espouse educational theories. The baseline data help all parties to concentrate on the problem the staff is trying to solve by focusing effort on the school's individual strengths and weaknesses and making the instructional offerings work for the students.

## Public Discussion

Schools that appeared to be making the most progress in establishing bonds with parents and neighbors usually did so through continual consultation. Several principals told of serious efforts to reestablish confidence between a school staff (usually an Anglo staff in a minority area) and parents. Two good examples:

> An elementary school was designated for site management simultaneously with the appointment of a new principal. The new principal and staff spent six months meeting with parents in neighborhood churches, community centers, and stores, discussing the school and promising to work with parents to make it a better place for children. A parent who was identified as a local opinion leader became the paid liaison between the parents and the staff. After a year of community meetings two nights each week, the principal, staff, and liaison person selected an advisory committee of parents who had displayed intense interest and definite points of view. This group joined the site-management process informally, not as a veto group but as a medium of two-way communication with parents and neighbors.

> A high school serving a very diverse clientele tried formal parent surveys and found the results uninformative: Response rates were low and only a small group of activist parents made any but perfunctory responses. The staff wanted both to ensure that parents knew that the school had become site-managed and to demonstrate that parent concerns would be taken seriously. The principal devised a modified "Delphi" technique, whereby the opinions of diverse groups are assessed, summarized, and fed back to the groups so that members can adjust their views in light of others'. School staff met with several groups of parents, each time ending the meeting by reducing the comments and suggestions to a few summary points. In a second meeting with each group, staff summarized the comments obtained from all groups and explained that the most commonly heard comments had received top priority in the school's planning. In a plenary meeting of all parents held at the end of the academic year, the staff reviewed progress in light of the most urgent parent concerns and scheduled new rounds of small group meetings to begin planning for the next year.

A few schools that we visited had resorted to public relations stunts (e.g., the principal leading the chorus in the new school song; an orchestra playing the school song as the school's mascot descended to the parking lot in a balloon). But most showed promise of evolving toward the kinds of accountability processes typical of private and magnet schools—open appraisal of past performance, candor about undeniable problems, discussion of action alternatives in light of resource trade-offs, and reappraisal of plans in light of apparent results.

**Periodic Reviews of Progress**

The written plan can make a real contribution to the other elements of strategic planning if it provides a framework of goals and events that focus action by elements of the school community. The difference between simply writing a plan and maintaining a strategic planning process is continuity: Plans can be written once a year and set aside; strategic planning is a year-round process. Strategic planning may include such milestones as the writing of an official document. The process involves problem formulation, the search for alternatives, self-assessment, and the projection of future activities.

A written plan leads to a strategic planning process if it is revisited throughout the year. If, for example, the written plan explicitly discusses the actions to be implemented, the staff can review the status of implementation periodically. If, further, the plan anticipates intermediate and ultimate outcomes, the staff can assess whether new activities are having the initial effects intended. If, finally, the plan clearly states the bases for choosing particular lines of action and the implications of a finding that the chosen actions did not work as expected, one year's plan can be the starting point for the next.

A commonly expressed concern about site-based management involves the time burden it imposes on school staff. When faced with the new challenge of managing their own affairs, many school staffs devote hundreds of hours to the hard and often rancorous work of hammering out decisionmaking processes, establishing new divisions of labor, and learning how to distinguish fundamental from peripheral issues. The school-site plan can help to establish the boundaries and structure of the site-management process: If the plan is formulated annually and used as the guiding document throughout the school year, staff meetings need not always reestablish first principles.

An annual planning and self-evaluation cycle could limit the burdens on staff during most of the school year. If the cycle started in the late spring and early summer with problem definition, review of current efforts, and plan drafting, the plan could be in place by the time school opened in September. Staff meetings during the school year

could be concerned with plan implementation and preliminary self-evaluation, until the planning cycle began again in spring.

To the extent that site-managed schools that we visited had developed any particular approaches to downward accountability, most depended on periodic reviews of plans. Such reviews included:

- Briefings and brochures describing the school program
- Annual "state-of-the-school" reviews by the principal, or headmaster, usually presented in an open meeting of parents and supporters, but occasionally published in brief summary form.

In such processes, the school staff have every reason to present the school's best side, and the audiences understand that the school is trying to create a positive impression. But the administrators of these schools understood the dangers of making false claims of success or sweeping problems under the rug. As several principals told us, the people who care enough about the school's performance to pay attention are not easily fooled. If the school has lost staff or students, suffered a difficult internal conflict, or slipped in its placement of graduates, the word gets around. To maintain the credibility of its claims, the school must acknowledge problems and show how they plan to respond.

## CENTRALLY ANALYZED PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS

All the school systems that we visited collected data on school performance and analyzed it on a school-by-school basis. In the past, such data represented upward accountability; the central administration and board used the information to monitor school performance and identified schools that needed special attention.

Centrally administered data systems were developed to serve the needs of centralized school systems. But they can serve the broader accountability needs of a site-managed school system by providing teachers, principals, and parents with the information they need to assess their own school's performance. However, the methods of data reporting require major changes; the nature of data collected also need some modification.

### Adjusting Data Demands for School-Site Needs

With the exception of Edmonton, the school systems that we studied had districtwide standardized student-achievement testing programs. All the U.S. districts concluded that site management required test scores as the minimum information necessary for superintendents and school boards to fulfill their responsibilities to the general public. The districts also had the staff and facilities needed for testing; its continuation was therefore virtually automatic.

Understanding that a rigidly uniform system of testing and analysis would inevitably impose pressures for uniformity in school programs, some district directors of testing and evaluation offered to adjust their systems. Dade County gave site-managed schools three years to develop their programs before test scores would be used as evaluation criteria.

Dade and Prince William counties offered to take account of school-level demographic changes in the central office's evaluation of growth or decline in average annual test scores. Dade County offered to analyze new immigrant students' scores separately from those of students who had received all of their education in Dade County. Columbus and Salt Lake City promised to evaluate individual schools' performance in light of the averages for demographically comparable schools.

In the most important change, centrally collected data will be used to support the self-assessment of school communities. Dade County will analyze its data on student test scores in ways requested by the school staff. Several other districts (in some cases at their own initiative and in other cases as required by the state government) are preparing to publish annual school-level report cards that could give parents and neighbors an overview of school performance.

These report cards typically will contain student achievement test and grade advancement averages and other key process indicators, such as student attendance figures. In some cases, these statistics will be disaggregated by student age and race. The most sophisticated report cards will provide multiple standards of comparison—with all other schools in the district, other schools of similar demographic composition, and the school's own performance in past years.

### Lateral and Downward Accountability

If school report cards are shared only with school staff, they can serve as a helpful goad from central management. But when the same data are published throughout the district, especially by mailings to parents or press accounts, they may fuel important downward and lateral accountability processes. Parents and neighbors will be able to use the data to focus their own questions to school staff and identify clearly which dimensions of school performance need concerted attention. The same data can serve the purposes of lateral accountability if the staffs of schools in the same feeder pattern use them as the basis for discussing student preparation.

We frame the foregoing as possibilities, because the report cards themselves are still under development and local parent and neighborhood groups have scarcely begun to appreciate their potential as the basis of downward accountability. Once the data become available, some time may elapse before they are seriously used. As Levin and Kirst argue, performance reporting is a reasonable foundation for accountability, but it assumes that the people who depend on the schools' performance will take the initiative to analyze the results in light of their own needs.[6]

### Parental and Neighborhood Satisfaction

A few school systems tried to factor parent and neighbor satisfaction into the upward accountability process. The central office would survey parent opinions and create school-specific attitude profiles. The central office would then reward or admonish individual school staffs and set quotas for improvement based on the overall levels and profiles of client satisfaction. One superintendent said,

> School systems have two products: student achievement and parent satisfaction. They often come together, but not always. Parents are sometimes satisfied with too little, but sometimes they expect more than any school can deliver. In any case, it's like a business. You can fail even with a good product if nobody wants to buy it, or you can succeed with a poor quality product if it is in fashion. In any case, you have to pay attention to both product quality and satisfaction.

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[6]See Henry M. Levin, "A Conceptual Framework for Accountability," *School Review*, Vol. 82, No. 3, May, 1982, pp. 363–391, and Michael W. Kirst, *Accountability: Implications for State and Local Policymakers*, IS 90–982, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 1990.

Edmonton has the most elaborate assessment of community satisfaction. All parents, and a sample of all neighbors in a school attendance area, are sent an annual questionnaire asking about the perceived quality of the school system and of the respondent's neighborhood school, the school's contributions to the community and responsiveness to community needs and demands, and the behavior and competence of students. The results of these questionnaires are analyzed for the system as a whole and for each school; data on an individual school are compared to the systemwide average and to the school's own past scores.

The superintendent emphasizes the importance of these satisfaction measures by his own actions. He meets annually with every principal and reviews the high and low spots on the community assessment and on similar assessments of student and teacher attitudes. "I make it the principal's job to keep those satisfaction scores high, and our interview ensures that he [the principal] is going to attend to the weak spots in the coming year."

The Edmonton superintendent understands that satisfaction is a loose measure of performance and that some principals might try to increase their scores by emphasizing noninstructional services ("entertainment, games, giving people jobs"). But he believes that normal central office monitoring of schools quickly reveals such abuses and that the surveys tap the opinions of too wide a range of people for patronage or entertainment to affect the scores.

Unlike the school report cards, central measurement of satisfaction requires no definite action on the part of parents or neighbors. It may be the only feasible approach to downward accountability in those areas where parents remain uninvolved. In our view, however, it reinforces the image of school systems as self-contained bureaucracies that do not open themselves to scrutiny by the general public.

A few site-managed schools sought their own formal instruments to assess school climate, parent satisfaction, student self-esteem, and the match between school curriculum and student learning styles. To our knowledge, none of these accountability methods was fully implemented by the end of the 1989–1990 school year.

School-level plans to build accountability around such formal assessment measures foundered on three obstacles: the lack of obviously relevant standard instruments, cost, and parents' skepticism about the meaning of the resulting measurements. Staff members who had initially been enthusiastic about school climate measures or complex

inventories of individual student learning styles became concerned about their face validity.

Parents easily form their own opinions of whether the school is a friendly place and whether staff members tend to business. A computer printout of their child's learning styles inventory may impress parents, but it will not make them any less concerned about a bad report card. As one principal told us, "If a parent has had trouble getting a response from us, it won't help to show that our staff morale is good. Parents who know that their children are unhappy and not learning won't sit still for a presentation of a hundred-point assessment of student learning styles."

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD

Whether the accountability approach is oriented toward magnet schools, public consultation, or school-specific data developed by the central office, the roles of the school board and superintendent must change fundamentally in dealing with site-managed schools. Overseers must deemphasize micromanagement of schools by rules and policy in favor of unobtrustive oversight of the schools' use of discretion.

Top officials need to be concerned about school quality and student outcomes, but they must deal with each site-managed school individually, in terms of its student body composition, past performance, and current plans. The board and superintendent have comprehensive responsibility for the school as a whole, rather than for particular parts of its operation. At the district level, only they have the authority to support a plan on its merits, regardless of whether it complies with preexisting policy. Any lower-ranking panel of central office unit heads possesses less flexibility in dealing with schools and is likely to stress compliance and administrative routine at the expense of the coherence of a school plan.

School-site plans now have such an audience only in Edmonton and Prince William County, where the superintendents directly review each plan annually. The Columbus plan established a reform panel led by the superintendent and head of the teachers' union; if put fully into operation, the panel would conduct a comprehensive review. Donald Thomas acted as the overall reviewer of site-management proposals while he was superintendent in Salt Lake City.

This review function could impose impossible transaction costs on superintendents in cities as large as Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York. In such cities, however, regional assistant superintendents could be delegated the review powers of the superintendent, subject only to the superintendent's review.

In other districts, the superintendent and board carry a heavy burden. But if these officials see site management as their central reform strategy, and if they resist being diverted by issues that can be resolved at the school level, they will find sufficient time for school-site reviews. In cities where the board attempts to limit its members' total time commitments, the board could review only one in five or ten schools each year, leaving it to the superintendent to review each school annually.

If, in reviewing school plans, the superintendent could depend on an independent school analysis done by the central office testing and accountability unit, school staffs would be prevented from trying to glide over their problems with slick or evasive presentations. The central office review need not be adversarial to have this effect: Any independent review of the same data available to the school staff would force the school to provide a balanced self-assessment as part of its plan.

Such a process would strengthen site-based management in two ways. First, school staff would understand that they had to take full account of the information in their statistical profile, thus ensuring complete and balanced planning. Second, schools that had passed through the process would have full authority to act. No subordinate bureaucracy could later derail part of a plan that the superintendent had openly reviewed and approved.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing approaches are rudimentary. They must be developed over time, as school systems gain experience with site-based management. Even now, however, workable accountability methods for site-managed schools clearly must have four features in common.

- They must integrate accountability considerations into the school's basic internal processes of problem-definition, strategy development, review of outcomes, and program adjustment.
- They must let one set of reports and meetings serve the purposes of upward, downward, and lateral accountability.

- They must rely on informal assessments and expert judgments as the main methods of evaluating unique aspects of the school program.
- Finally, they must rely on the central office, rather than the school staff, to collect objective data about school-level needs and outcomes.

If schools are to become truly site-managed and distinct one from another, the mechanisms of lateral and downward accountability must be designed to meet each school's particular objectives and strategies, not chosen arbitrarily on grounds of cost, ready availability, familiarity, or psychometric tastes. Further, given the heavy time burdens that site-based management imposes, lateral and downward accountability mechanisms must be simple and impose low net costs.

As in private and independent schools, accountability mechanisms must become integral parts of the school's necessary daily management processes, not special-purpose add-ons. As schools become more distinctive and live more and more on their reputations and attractiveness to students, accountability will become, as it has in private schools, everyone's constant concern.

# 5. CONCLUSIONS

Like many other ideas that call for a change in organizational and human behavior, the decentralization of school systems has progressed slowly and with difficulty. This is not to say that site-based management has failed. Moreover, the difficulty of decentralizing is not an argument for rejecting the concept.

The situation that motivated site-based management in the first place still exists. Past efforts to control schools in detail from the outside, by contract, court decree, regulation, and financial incentives, have made schools more responsive to higher authorities than to the students and parents whom they are supposed to serve. Many principals and teachers, because they do not feel free to make full use of their professional judgment, have come to consider themselves pawns of the bureaucracy. They do not feel personally responsible for their schools' products.

In our view, a system of strong site-managed public schools can function in any community. But if such a school system is to work, school district and school personnel will have to act on an understanding of the five principal conclusions that we draw from the analysis of our fieldwork:

1. Though site-based management focuses on individual schools, it is in fact a reform of the entire school system.
2. Site-based management will lead to real changes at the school level only if it is the fundamental reform strategy, not just one among several reform projects.
3. Site-managed schools are likely to evolve over time and to develop distinctive characters, goals, and operating styles.
4. A system of distinctive, site-managed schools requires a rethinking of accountability.
5. The ultimate accountability mechanism for site-managed schools is parental choice.

## A SYSTEMWIDE REFORM

Site-based management requires more than an exhortation to the schools to change. Schools cannot change their established modes of operation if all of the expectations and controls of a centralized system remain intact.

Teachers and principals are naturally concerned about their careers, and they respond far more strongly to stable incentives than to ephemeral ones. If the school system central office obviously remains poised to eliminate the schools' independence, or is visibly eroding it by placing schools under new constraints, school staff members cannot afford to take site management very seriously. They will expect site management to disappear, as did many previous initiatives; and though many will go through the motions, they will do so as compliant bureaucrats, not as managers newly enfranchised to run their own enterprises.

Some school boards and superintendents may be inclined to regard site-based management as the latest educational novelty, requiring obligatory acknowledgment from all who want to be viewed as being at the cutting edge of reform. Anyone with those objectives can easily attain them by starting a carefully hedged site-management pilot that can be abandoned as soon as the going gets tough or a new idea becomes popular.

School board members and superintendents who truly want their schools to become initiative-taking, problem-solving organizations must prepare to change their own modes of operation. They must commit themselves to long-term decentralization, avoid the temptation to settle all issues by policy pronouncements, and reorient the central office staff to assist, not regulate, the schools.

## A FUNDAMENTAL REFORM, NOT A SHORT-TERM PROJECT

Site-based management cannot be just one among several reform projects attempted at the same time. Teachers and principals cannot simultaneously take greater responsibility for both designing their own school program and complying with growing numbers of external constraints. When site-based management is one among many new projects, school staffs tend to isolate its operation: A decision-sharing team of teachers and administrators implement one or two innovations, but the rest of the school operates as before.

Similarly, site-based management cannot function simply as a new way of conducting labor-management relations or increasing teacher job satisfaction. Seen as no more than a new method for resolving adult conflicts within the school, site-based management will not substantially benefit the students. To the contrary, adult conflicts, which are likely to be protracted and personalized, will distract attention from instruction and student services.

If the goal of site-based management is to increase school staff members' capacity to respond to student needs, it must affect the entire school, not just part of it. In addition, site management must focus on instruction, not on labor-management tensions. A site-management strategy with these characteristics is truly revolutionary because it makes teachers and principals personally responsible for their students' learning.

## A SYSTEM OF DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS

After an initial period of floundering, in which many school staffs concern themselves with labor-management and budget issues, schools that are free to solve their own problems will develop specific and well-defined climates and methods of instruction. The challenge for school boards and superintendents will be how to assist and guarantee quality in a system whose basic premise is variety, not uniformity.

Teachers and principals who have options and take responsibility for the results of their work will develop their own methods. These need not be unique or innovative—many schools may develop as frank imitations of an existing model appropriate for their situation. But the schools within a district are likely to become less and less alike.

This process will ultimately produce a drastically new kind of public school system. Instead of a group of virtually identical schools, each adhering to standard mandates on policy and practice, a site-managed school system will offer a variety of schools, each based on a definite mission and approach to instruction.

In such a system, the board, superintendent, and central office will assume the role of enabling teachers and principals to run distinctive schools. The top officials, and the researchers who serve and advise them, must abandon the search for both the one best model for all schools and control methods that guarantee standard practice everywhere.

Teachers and principals, for their part, must learn to take initiative and to resist the temptation to shift responsibility back to the central office when the going gets tough. Public school staffs have learned how to protect themselves by complying with central office directives. Site-based management totally eliminates that protection.

## NEW ACCOUNTABILITY METHODS

The basis of a school's accountability is its mission and character: Are the school climate, curriculum, and pedagogy well matched to the particular students to be served, and does the school deliver on its promises about the experiences it will provide students? The superintendent, board, and community should have methods for judging whether a school's goals are realistic and sufficiently ambitious; but once that judgment is made, accountability becomes a process of monitoring fulfillment of promises.

In a fully developed site-managed school system, accountability, like school management, is a decentralized process. Site-based management makes school staff, not the central office, accountable for school performance. As one reviewer of this report commented,

> Principals and teachers really aren't accountable today. All we have to do is show up for work every day and put on a good parents' night once or twice a year. If something really goes wrong in the school, the superintendent takes responsibility. He comes to the school and meets with parents and promises to address the problem by providing new inputs. With site-based management, teachers and principals become responsible. They should want to solve problems, knowing that they lose their freedom if the superintendent has to come in and fix things for them.

The local managers of any decentralized organization know that their freedom of action depends on successful management of local problems. If they can serve customers successfully, the central office will have no reason to intervene in their business. As site-managed schools become more independent and distinctive, the importance of their own clienteles will grow.

If parents think the school is right for their children, and if the school delivers on its promises, upward accountability is not difficult. Conversely, a site-managed school that loses parents' confidence comes under great pressure for change, whatever its reputation in the central office.

A distinctive school ultimately lives on its reputation, which is based on its constituency's overall impression of its performance. A school's

statement of mission and its own promises about student performance should be the principal standards against which it is judged, both by central authorities (the board and superintendent) and by the community.

## PARENTAL CHOICE

By far the simplest way to hold a school accountable for its service to individual students is to let parents express their approval through choice. In the aggregate, parent choice provides an excellent barometer of a school's reputation. If parents are free to choose where they will send their children to school, school staffs have strong incentives to present their goals clearly and offer strong evidence of performance.

At the individual level, choice lets parents who have strong preferences select among existing alternatives and eliminates fighting to change a school that they do not like. If a school's character is well established, a parent can choose with confidence; if a school does not provide the ambience, services, or outcomes it promised, parents have unambiguous grounds for complaint.

Under choice, the central office's accountability role is, first, to license schools to operate according to the principles proposed by their staffs. Second, the central office must guarantee the integrity of the parent choice process by providing information on all schools' programs and outcomes.

Though choice is the logical end point of site-based management, there are political and practical reasons why many school systems will proceed more slowly in adopting it. Politically, choice has come to be seen as a movement against public schools, and teachers' unions and administrators oppose it. Choice can, in the long run, become a liberating force for all parties in public education, but educators will understandably approach it with caution.

As a practical matter, choice presupposes the existence of a selection of schools, each of which has sufficiently high quality and definitive enough character to attract parents and students. Such schools will take time to develop in many places, and the grounds for choice will therefore be established only over a period of several school years.

In the interim, site-managed school systems can approximate choice in their accountability processes, emphasizing the schools' ability to articulate goals and expected outcomes, involving parents and

community members in reviews of school services, and customizing evaluation processes to fit an individual school's character.

## IMPLICATIONS

Like other rule-driven government agencies, schools have come to concentrate on tasks that are discrete, bounded, and noncontroversial—that is, the implementation of programs and the imparting of specific facts and skills—rather than on cognitive development, the integration of ideas, and students' personal growth. If site-based management is to be accomplished, however, school staff must take more initiative and responsibility in serving their students.

Increased initiative and responsibility are almost certainly incompatible with the continuation of multiple external regulations and controls. No one can predict whether the ultimate outcome will be public schools virtually as independent of day-to-day supervision as today's private schools or public schools tightly constrained by a centrally administered system. Clearly, however, the residual functions of central administration should not include regulation of schools by multiple centers of power, each concerned with only a small part of the school program.

That said, we must caution that in the long-term interests of students, schools cannot become laws unto themselves. They must somehow maintain universal standards that reflect a student's ability to succeed in both higher education and the labor market and society's need for competent, productive, and ethical citizens. The preservation of these standards in a system of lightly regulated schools is the central challenge of educational reform.

Decentralization has already worked in many schools, in the sense that staffs are taking the initiative in serving students' needs and taking responsibility for results. These schools must not be reregulated because other schools are finding site management difficult. If, as the experience in Dade County suggests, many school staffs take two or three years to define their respective roles and learn to focus their energies on instructional issues, the schools that can make good use of their independence will continue to grow. Those schools, too, should be able to deal with a central office oriented to local initiative and participatory management.

Some schools—probably those in inner city areas and most constrained by regulation, mandate, court decree, and union contracts—

may take even longer. They, in particular, must be dealt with individually, as organizations with special needs that require help and nurturing from the central office and other, more successful schools. Of all schools, they have the greatest need for site-specific problem solving and the least need for standardization and diverse external controls.

The answer to the question, What if it doesn't work? is that school systems must continue to help schools become strong competent organizations, not clones of a central model or products of external regulation. The current system of regulation by multiple external power centers need not be preserved because it should never have been put in place.

The basic character of American public education will be determined in the course of working out the tension between the responsibilities of central authorities and individual school staffs. In the future, the traditional actors in school policymaking—the school board, superintendent, central office administrators, teachers, principals, and unions—will play important roles, but these roles will change. The final outcome is not clear, but the following questions must be answered:

- What central leadership actions are needed for a public school system to move effectively toward a greater emphasis on initiative and self-governance by individual school communities? What are the implications of such a movement for the roles of the school board, superintendent, and the leaders of teachers' and administrators' unions?
- In what areas of staffing, evaluation, curriculum planning, and instructional improvement, will individual schools continue to need external help?
- Which of those forms of assistance must state and local education agencies, unions, or other nonmarket entities continue to provide, either because no alternative sources are likely to appear, or because they are inextricably connected to the public interest in protecting students or ensuring proper use of public funds?
- Which needed forms of assistance can market or nonprofit public service agencies provide?
- How should state and local agencies move to divest themselves of outmoded roles and prepare for more effective execution of the remaining ones?

- How must organizations whose roles in school operation and governance depend on their relations with the state and local education agencies—namely, advocacy groups for students with special needs and teachers' and administrators' unions—prepare themselves for the future?

These questions are new and challenging for all the parties involved in public elementary and secondary education. The traditional actors in school policymaking will still play essential roles, but those roles will inevitably change.

Further, a change in one actor's role inevitably entails changes across the board. As the superintendent's job changes to focus on the encouragement of independent decisionmaking at the school level, the school board will inevitably lose the ability to micromanage schools through the superintendent. As the leader of the local teachers' union becomes a partner with the superintendent, the relationships of principals and school-level shop stewards will change from confrontation to collaboration. As the school board and central office cede greater initiative over staff selection to the individual school, the scope of the teachers' union contract with the school system will inevitably narrow.

When school staffs accept greater responsibility for setting goals and tailoring programs to their students' specific needs, central office curriculum coordinators and evaluators will begin to advise, rather than control. As schools become increasingly independent and distinctive, parents will have stronger grounds on which to choose among schools and, therefore, a greater need for information about school missions, strategies, and performance.

As parents' need for information increases, the likelihood will grow that private entrepreneurs or business-led civic groups—if not the schools themselves—will provide it. Finally, in the face of increased parental understanding of school operations and performance, school staff will face ever-stronger incentives to maintain parents' confidence and loyalty.

None of these trends can be anticipated in detail, nor can the implicit conflicts be resolved by reasoned argument or examination of precedents from related fields. Although school systems just entering site-based management might hope to learn from others' experience, most will be forced to find their own way. These issues will be resolved over time by a combination of practical experience at the school and district level, by research that clarifies the issues and informs actors

in one locality about the solutions devised elsewhere, and by negotiation among the affected parties.

Given the shortcomings of many urban school systems, the opportunity costs are low. The difficulty of accomplishing decentralization argues for harder and more insistent work toward it, not for abandonment of the effort.

# Appendix

## OVERVIEW OF FIVE SCHOOL DISTRICTS STUDIED

Each school district that we visited in the course of this research has made serious efforts to shift decisionmaking authority from the central office to individual schools. Because each system adopted site-based management (SBM) for its own purposes, the approaches to it vary tremendously. In some districts, site-based management has afforded individual schools a significant degree of control over three broad areas related to day-to-day school operations: budget, personnel, and curriculum. In others, SBM has meant that schools have limited control over some, but not all, of these broad areas.

Despite the variation in site-management plans, a reasonably standard description of each school system's approach to SBM can be developed under the following categories:

- District background
- Motivation for SBM
- Scope and schedule of SBM
- What SBM means to a school
- SBM's effect on district organization and services
- Evaluating SBM.

### COLUMBUS, OHIO

The Columbus school district has 66,000 students in some 136 schools. Like many mid-sized, urban districts, Columbus has faced declining federal support, racial tensions, court-ordered busing to achieve desegregation, a high dropout rate, teacher dissatisfaction, falling college entrance rates, and middle class flight. By the mid-1980s, most of those involved agreed that Columbus's schools were failing and that they needed drastic reform.

### Motivation for SBM

In February 1989, Columbus public schools adopted a comprehensive reform plan. The plan, of which site-based management is only one part, resulted from a joint effort by the school board, teachers' union, superintendent, parents, and community members. It dramatically restructures all aspects of public education, including its organization, content, and methods. It also addresses the state of Ohio's mandate that all Ohio public schools offer "competency based education."

A major theme in the reform plan is governance. The plan calls for the implementation of both site-based management at the district level and shared decisionmaking (SDM) at the school level.

### Scope and Schedule of SBM

During the 1989–1990 and 1990–1991 school years, the district conducted a pilot program testing SBM and SDM in five so-called scout high schools. Elementary and middle schools will join the scout program during the 1991–1992 school year.

These schools competed for admission to the program and were chosen on the basis of school reform plans—prepared by school administrators, teachers, parents, and students—submitted to the central office. The reform plans detailed how the schools would implement the recommendations put forth in the 1989 reform plan if they were given the opportunity to implement SBM and SDM. The district plans gradually to expand site-based management to include all schools.

### What SBM Means to a School

High schools interested in participating in the pilot SBM/SDM program (i.e., in becoming scout schools) submitted formal applications to the district. These applications consisted primarily of a detailed school plan that noted deficiencies in the school and demonstrated how the school would use SBM and SDM to address those problems. The district chose four high schools for the scout program in 1989–1990 and a similar number in 1990–1991.

Scout schools received extra funding from the district to enable them to implement the special programs proposed in their school plans. Individual schools gained greater control over their budgets, control that both administrators and teachers exercised through a shared

decisionmaking cabinet. Schools also gained increased authority over such areas as professional development, student discipline, accountability measures, and physical plant.

While the scout schools are implementing site-based management and shared decisionmaking, all Columbus public schools practice some form of shared governance. Each school in Columbus has an association building council (ABC) composed of four faculty representatives (two chosen by the principal and two by the faculty) and a union representative. The ABC is responsible for producing the school's annual reform plan, based on (1) input from the school's various constituencies (e.g., parents, teachers, and central office specialists) and (2) an analysis of districtwide school-level data provided by the central office.

Each scout school's shared decisionmaking cabinet has the discretion to decide all issues related to school reform and the organization, methods, and content of schooling. In scout schools, the SDM cabinet, rather than the ABC, develops the school's reform plan. The district's four-year reform plan calls for the gradual implementation of SDM cabinets in additional schools beginning in the 1991–1992 school year.

The individual scout school determines the membership of its SDM cabinet, which must include the principal (who chairs the cabinet), teachers, and parents. An ABC member also sits in the cabinet, providing a link between the two governing bodies. The principal may appoint additional teachers to the cabinet, as long as their number does not exceed the number of teachers elected to membership. The remaining members of the cabinet (teachers and parents) are elected by their peers. SDM cabinets may also appoint ad hoc teams to study the implementation of a given piece of the reform plan.

Shared decisionmaking in scout schools is a formal, binding process. The SDM cabinet makes decisions by a simple majority vote. These decisions are binding on the principal unless he/she formally vetoes them. The SDM cabinet can override the principal's veto by a two-thirds vote.

The district's four-year reform plan calls for an evaluation during the 1990–1991 school year of the scout school experiment with site-based management and shared decisionmaking. It is unclear what means in addition to the data provided by these variables the district will use to make this evaluation.

## SBM's Effect on District Organization and Services

In searching for a way to decentralize the district's organizational structure, the central office sought to devise a mechanism that would at the same time equally distribute the district's resources and allow individual school sites to participate actively in the resource-allocation process. The central office's solution reorganized the district along feeder patterns into six self-directing communities of schools that report directly to the central Office of Teaching and Learning. This new structure provides two decentralized loci of SBM and SDM—individual schools and the individual communities of schools.

The central office reorganized the district around communities of schools out of a belief that were individual schools to become the sole locus of SBM/SDM, those seeking the same resources would compete rather than collaborate. Furthermore, if schools did not have an intermediate-level entity to which they could turn for resolution of resource-allocation disputes, they might have to rely on the central office to decide. Central office intervention at that point would recentralize decisionmaking authority in the district.

In addition, the communities of schools represent a means of decentralizing resource allocation so as to take into account differing local needs and demands. According to the central office, the communities of schools "represent the smallest and most appropriate unit in which to introduce shared decisionmaking across schools with common interests but varying needs."[1]

The leader of each community of schools oversees the implementation of school reform and the allocation of resources within that community of schools. Beginning in 1990–1991, the central office will allocate all district funds that exceed minimum state standards to the six communities of schools using a weighted formula that is sensitive to differential local needs and demands. These resources represent a common fund to be used by all schools in the community to fund their reform activities. Leaders will allocate these funds based on (1) the activities and programs proposed by the schools in their reform plans and (2) the needs of other schools within the community.

The central office will also allocate discretionary student service resources (e.g., school nurses, counselors, and psychologists) to each

[1]*The Elementary and Middle Schools Task Force,* Columbus Public Schools, January 16, 1990.

community of schools, again using a weighted formula. A school will be allowed to broker resources with other schools in that community of schools, for example, exchanging a school nurse for a counselor, or a mathematics expert for a reading teacher. The central office envisions that this resource allocation and bartering mechanism will force schools to "strike a balance at a level of discourse just above the building . . . [and] write new social contracts that will lead to a new community commitment."[2]

In addition to fundamentally restructuring the district, Superintendent Ronald Etheridge completly reorganized the central office itself. As part of this reorganization, the central office consolidated all of the special functions (e.g., curriculum) into one office, the Office of Teaching and Learning, and gave this office the responsibility for overseeing site-based management. Having the community of schools leaders report to this office serves to counterbalance any tendency by this office to interfere with decentralization.

### Evaluating SBM

Both the district and individual schools can use various data to monitor whether site-based management and shared decisionmaking are in fact contributing to improved student outcomes. Information on some 40 variables, including attendance, enrollment in certain academic courses, dropouts, and mobility is readily available. These data are disaggregated by race, sex, and socioeconomic status. The schools use these data for their annual reform plans, and both the schools and the central office use them in evaluating schools' performance.

## EDMONTON, ALBERTA

The Edmonton school district includes almost 195 urban and suburban schools and 73,000 students. The schools have been experimenting with site-based management for over a decade, having adopted SBM largely as a result of the personal philosophy of the superintendent, Dr. Michael Strembitsky, who has served in that position since 1973.

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[2]Ibid.

### Motivation for SBM

Unlike many of the school systems that we visited, Edmonton did not turn to site-based management as a last resort to improve its failing schools. Although Edmonton public schools suffer from many of the same problems that plague big city schools in the United States, they had not reached a comparable level of crisis.

Edmonton turned to site-based management out of a belief that running a school system is much like running a large corporation and that decentralizing decisionmaking authority and initiative is sound management. In Strembitsky's view, participatory management—at both the district and school levels—directly affects the quality of education.

### Scope and Schedule of SBM

In 1976, Strembitsky initiated a pilot program to decentralize decisionmaking authority from the central office to individual school sites; in 1979, he implemented the program throughout the district. When he initially introduced the concept of decentralization, Strembitsky focused only on decentralizing budgetary authority. In fact, the program, as it was originally implemented, was so narrow in scope that Strembitsky refers to it as school-based budgeting, not school-based management.

When the central office implemented site-based budgeting and management districtwide in 1979, it did not impose one central model on all schools. Rather, it provided schools with an SBM/SDM framework that defined (1) the degree of autonomy assigned to individual schools and (2) a range of management options. The central office left each school to work out the details of school governance, provided that it stayed within the general guidelines established by the central office.

### What SBM Means to a School

Over the past decade, the central office has broadened the scope of its decentralization efforts to include much more than just budgetary matters. While school-site authority over budgetary matters remains the essence of site management in Edmonton, SBM has come to mean the decentralization of authority over a much wider range of issues.

Site-based management has given schools what Strembitsky calls "the freedom, but not the license, to do their own thing." Schools submit annual school plans in which they propose innovative programs and solutions to the problems that they are facing. The central office imposes only one constraint on these plans: They must fall within the general site-management framework established by the central office and must not contravene the district's educational goals.

Under site-based management in Edmonton, the central office has given individual schools control over such day-to-day school operations as budgeting, central office services, and personnel. Schools control 75 percent of the district's operating budget. If a school participates in a program that allows it to control its own building utilities, and if it is able to keep its cost under the amount the central office allows for utilities, it can spend the savings as it chooses. However, if the cost of its utilities exceeds the amount allocated by the central office, the school must come up with the money from elsewhere. If a school opts out of the program, the central office collects any savings and covers any excess costs.

Schools have also gained some input into the amount and quality of services provided by the central office. Under a pilot program, the central office allots 15 schools a given amount of money with which they can purchase services (e.g., a math expert, a school psychologist, or a social worker) normally provided free of charge by the central office. Schools have the option of using this money to buy services from private providers if they prefer, although there is a small monetary incentive for them to use central office services.

Finally, schools have greater influence under SBM in the hiring of substitute teachers. The central office allocates schools the funds with which to hire substitute teachers for a period of three days or less. The principal decides whether to spend the money to hire a substitute or to save the money by having other teachers or administrators fill in for the absent teacher.

If the principal decides not to hire a substitute and the school ends the year with unused substitute teacher funds, the school can spend that money as it chooses. The central office retains the authority to require that substitute teachers be hired for absences of more than three days, and it pays them out of the district's budget.

As part of the decentralization of decisionmaking authority, all schools in Edmonton utilize some form of participatory management. Shared decisionmaking in Edmonton public schools is an advisory, rather than a formal, process.

The superintendent encourages all administrators (both school- and district-level) to seek advice from groups likely to be affected by a given decision. However, administrators are not bound by that advice; they are required only to consider it. The rationale behind this practice has to do with accountability. The central office holds principals accountable for what goes on in their schools. Therefore, principals must be vested with the authority to make decisions about day-to-day school operations. It would be difficult to hold them accountable if they did not have the final say in making decisions, but were instead bound by the decisions of shared decisionmaking bodies.

### SBM's Effect on District Organization and Services

The central office restructured the district as part of its decentralization effort, dividing it into seven cross-level groups (areas), each containing roughly the same number of schools. Each area is headed by an area associate superintendent, who negotiates with the central office to which he or she is responsible. These area superintendents oversee the implementation of school reform in all schools in their group.

The superintendent has devolved much of the initiative regarding day-to-day school operations to two subordinate levels: the area superintendent and the school principal. Area superintendents oversee all day-to-day school operations (including personnel) and monitor the quality of the education process in their schools.

Strembitsky views the area superintendent not so much as a part of the central office, but as an extension of the school-level administration. He reinforces this perception by having most of the area superintendents' support staffs located in schools rather than in the central office. Each area superintendent has an office and a secretary in the central office; the rest of his or her staff is located in various schools in his or her area.

The central office also has greatly simplified the lines of communication and reporting within the district. Building principals report to only two people in the district hierarchy: their area superintendent and the superintendent himself. This simplified structure helps the central office to guard against a recentralization of initiative that might result from a requiring building administrators to report to a large number of central office bureaucrats.

### Evaluating SBM

Edmonton makes extensive use of sophisticated, detailed opinion surveys to evaluate and assess how well its schools are performing. The central office sends these surveys to principals, teachers, staff, parents, and students. Once it receives the completed surveys, the central office correlates the data and compares them to data from previous years. It then analyzes all the data school by school and administrator by administrator for indications of potential problem areas in schools and in the district at large. If the survey data reveal potential problems, the area superintendent is responsible for examining the problems and coming up with solutions.

## DADE COUNTY

The Dade County public school (DCPS) system is the fourth largest district in the United States. During the 1987–1988 school year, it served 254,235 students, 43 percent of whom are Hispanic, 3 percent black, 23 percent non-Hispanic white, and 1 percent other. The district employs 23,000 full-time staff, including 14,000 teachers, and has a budget of nearly $1.5 billion a year. Being a county system, the school district embraces an enormous and varied geographical area, including both inner city and suburbs, commercial districts, and wealthy and impoverished residential neighborhoods.

### Motivation for SBM

Dade County has received much publicity for its SBM/SDM program. In Dade, these terms refer to professionalizing teaching and decentralizing decisions to the school level, giving principals, teachers, and in some cases parents and community members more control over their schools. The idea is to encourage the development of new strategies tailored to local schools, flattening the administrative structure, cutting the red tape of district administration, and focusing teachers' and principals' attention on instruction.

### Scope and Schedule of SBM

Starting from a nucleus of 33 schools, site-based management expanded to include 147 by the 1990–1991 school year. In addition, several dozen existing schools will adopt site-based management each year, and the new schools being built to accommodate the rapidly

growing immigrant population will be site-managed from the day they open. Though there is no specific deadline for conversion of the entire district to site-based management, the process is expected to be completed by the mid-1990s.

### What SBM Means to a School

Teachers and principals, along with parents (and in many cases, students), are redesigning various aspects of their schools—from the kinds of textbooks and teaching materials they use to the way teachers are hired and evaluated. With approved waivers in school board rules, teacher labor contract provisions, and even State Department of Education regulations, SBM/SDM schools have restructured the school day, created smaller classes, designated new teaching positions/functions, and implemented a host of other changes designed to improve student achievement and school effectiveness.

At the elementary level, the most common innovations deal with class schedules, bilingual education, and community involvement. Innovations at the secondary level usually involve organization and scheduling. Other common innovations affect staff selection and support, such as the development of faculty counseling programs, in-service support, and other staff evaluation and remediation practices.

Under district guidelines, SBM/SDM schools receive the same level of funds as non-SBM/SDM schools, with the decisions on how to allocate the funds, as well as how to organize instructional plans, left up to each individual school through their SDM cadre. SDM bodies or cadres configure themselves differently from school to school and refer to themselves by different names (i.e., senate, educational cabinet, governing council, decisionmaking committee, program improvement council, steering committees, faculty governing council, etc.). Each school's model involves a central decisionmaking body (usually consisting of 5 to 12 members, larger in senior highs), acting on issues that "trickle up" through committees, subcommittees, and/or task forces (i.e., curriculum budget, student management, school and community relations, scheduling, peer assistance).

Cadre decisions are made on a simple majority basis (two thirds in a few cases). In seven schools, the principal may veto a decision but must in every case consult with the United Teachers of Dade (UTD) steward or provide a written rationale. The veto provision has not been utilized at any school, however, since the inception of the pilot program.

## SBM's Effect on District Organization

The DCPS restructuring aims to do more than simply tinker with current practices and procedures, institute isolated school-improvement programs, or do what has always been done, only better. The Dade comprehensive plan seeks the professionalization of teaching. It permeates every dimension of the school system and affects its total design and culture.

The following four threshold objectives, which constituted the original blueprint for the professionalization of teaching, continue to drive policy decisions today:

- Provide professional levels of compensation
- Decentralize management and decisionmaking
- Expand professional development opportunities
- Reduce paperwork.

Since 1985, the superintendent and school board, in cooperation with the UTD, have undertaken a series of major policy actions that undergird and continue to fuel Dade's sweeping efforts to professionalize education, including:

- A ratified landmark teachers' contract which recognizes teachers as professionals by providing a 28 percent salary increase over three years and devotes an entire article to specific professionalization strategies
- The establishment of a bureau of professionalization in the DCPS and a department of professionalization in the UTD to plan, implement, monitor, and report on the district's restructuring efforts
- The inclusion of educational professionalization as one of the district's major system priorities
- The adoption of a new school board rule that outlines the district's philosophy, goals, and assumptions regarding restructuring.

As a corollary to the school system's professionalization of the teaching task force, the superintendent and school board have adopted a model for planning, developing, and implementing specific strategies through which administrative and supervisory roles can also be professionalized. The model includes the establishment of the administrators' professional development committee, which is cochaired by

the associate superintendent of the bureau of professionalism and president of the Dade County School administrators' association.

Based on recommendations from this committee to the superintendent and subsequent school board approval, all principals were reclassified in 1987–1988 and are being compensated at the same executive level. This policy decision reflected "effective schools" research, which credits visionary leadership of effective principals as the single most important ingredient for effective schools.[3] The administrators' professional development committee this year is in the process of developing professionalization recommendations regarding the roles of the lead principal and assistant principal, as well as addressing a number of other professional development issues.

### Evaluating SBM

The DCPS office of educational accountability (OEA) prepared a conceptual plan for the evaluation of SBMand SDM. The plan called for:

1. Evaluation procedures that coincided with the developmental state of the project; the first two years of the study focused on implementation (process) and the last year (1989–1990) of the evaluation dealt with impact (product).
2. Global assessment of the project as an intact entity, coupled with administrative reviews performed by individual schools (with support from OEA staff), focusing on the unique features of their projects.
3. External review of the evaluation process conducted by a consultant from outside Dade County.[4]

## JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

The Jefferson County school district, the nation's 17th largest with nearly 160 schools, serves some 93,000 students in Louisville and its suburbs. Since the early 1980s, the district has been actively engaged in the reform and restructuring of its schools. The reforms include

[3]See Ronald R. Edmonds, "Making Public Schools Effective," *Social Policy*, September–October 1981, pp. 56–60.

[4]The three-year SBM/SDM evaluation was described in Collins and Hanson, *Summative Evaluation Report, School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making Project, 1987–88 Through 1989–90*, Dade County Public School Office of Educational Accountability, January 1991.

site-based management, shared decisionmaking, and strengthening the teaching profession. In particular, the district has sought ways to relate this systemwide vision for change to the needs of individual schools.

### Motivation for SBM

Jefferson County public schools suffer from many of the same ills as most big-city schools: declining federal support, racial tension, court-ordered busing, and middle-class flight. In the late 1970s, Louisville city public schools were ordered to merge with the neighboring county schools so as to facilitate desegregation and student busing. At about the same time, the local business community became concerned over the failing health of Louisville's public schools.

School reform and restructuring began in earnest in 1981, when Dr. Donald Ingwerson became superintendent. Ingwerson established a strong personal relationship with the business community and has succeeded in attracting tremendous support from local businesses.

### Scope and Schedule of SBM

The superintendent and the Gheens Professional Development Academy have played the major roles in the Jefferson County reform efforts. The Gheens Academy resulted from a joint effort by the school system and the Gheens Foundation, a local endowment committed to education issues and community development. Together, the two have sought to focus school reform on (1) the organization, methods, and content of schooling and (2) attracting political and financial support from outside the school system.

Jefferson County's reform effort provides schools with several different approaches to school restructuring from which to choose. Although none of the models specifically refers to site-based management, all emphasize participatory management involving both SBM and SDM.

### What SBM Means to a School

By spring 1988, groups from schools throughout Jefferson County were working with the Gheens Academy to design and implement four approaches to school reform and restructuring, each based on a

different set of educational principles. These models provide both general guidelines for school reform and restructuring and a network for schools to work together to improve education. A brief description of the four models follows.

1. Professional Development Schools. Under this approach, developed by Dr. Phil Schlechty at the Gheens Academy, schools practice participatory management. Most decisionmaking regarding day-to-day operations takes place at the schools, and teachers participate in decisionmaking through shared governance.
2. Coalition of Essential Schools. This approach, developed by Dr. Theodore Sizer at Brown University, encourages schools to develop strong school-community relations with the community. Rather than offer schools a specific reform model, the approach recommends that schools develop plans that are appropriate to the needs of their students and communities.
3. Learning Choices Schools. These schools are magnet-type schools, each targeting one or more areas for in-depth development. The program is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's magnet school funds. These schools emphasize participatory management by teachers, parents, and students.
4. Middle Grades Assessment Program. Under this program schools and teachers approach school reform by focusing on schoolwide issues. It emphasizes a shared decisionmaking approach to governance and problem solving. The program was developed by the Ford Foundation and the Center for Early Adolescence in North Carolina.

Schools apply to the central office to adopt a certain model based on a majority vote of the teachers and staff. By fall 1990, 85 percent of the schools in Jefferson County had chosen to adopt one or more approaches to school reform.

### SBM's Effect on District Organization and Services

Each of the school district's approaches to school restructuring is based on the superintendent's philosophy of "collapsing the pyramid" by decentralizing decisionmaking authority. The central office endorses the idea of participatory management, i.e., giving principals and teachers the authority to run the schools. Thus, participatory

management involves both site-based management and shared decisionmaking.

The implementation of participatory management resulted in a reorganization of the central office and a dramatic reduction in the number of associate superintendents, including the elimination of all area superintendent positions. The removal of this administrative level between the superintendent and school principals reflects the superintendent's personal philosophy that the way to manage schools is to manage principals. Every principal in Jefferson County reports directly to the superintendent.

### Evaluating SBM

Jefferson County regards its commitment to site-based management as permanent. Because recent state legislation mandates site management for all Kentucky schools, Jefferson County has no urgent need to make a summative judgment of the value of the concept. However, as part of its open relationship with the public and business community, the school system publishes annual outcome data for all its schools and for the groups of site-managed schools.

## PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Prince William County is located in suburban Virginia, about 30 miles south of Washington, D.C. The school district has 60 schools and some 43,000 students. The tremendous growth of Prince William County in recent years has resulted in the addition of almost 1000 new students a year to Prince William County public schools. According to recent estimates, this growth rate will continue for the foreseeable future.

### Motivation for SBM

The Prince William County public school district adopted site-based management and shared decisionmaking largely as a result of the personal philosophy of the superintendent, Dr. Edward Kelly. The central office defines its approach to school governance as "a philosophy of management by which the individual school becomes a self-directed, responsible, and educationally accountable entity within the parameters established by the school board and the division super-

intendent, and where decisions are economical, efficient, and equitably facilitate learning."[5]

### Scope and Schedule of SBM

In summer 1988, the central office selected five schools, including one high school, one middle school, and three elementary schools, to participate in a two-year pilot program. In July 1990, the central office implemented the program districtwide, and all Prince William County schools adopted school governance models based on site-based management and shared decisionmaking.

The SBM/SDM program has the following four goals:

- Improve the quality of education in Prince William County
- Enhance the work environment for teachers and staff
- Foster parental and community support for Prince William County schools
- Improve the decisionmaking process by providing teachers and staff the opportunity to use their initiative to solve problems.

### What SBM Means to a School

The essence of site-based management in Prince William County is the transfer of authority over the bulk of the district's operating budget to the school. According to the central office, "there is a direct correlation between the amount of money transferred to the control of local schools and the extent to which there is true management at the school level." Site-based management gives the principal the authority to:

- Control roughly 75 percent of the school's operating budget
- Establish the number of employees and the areas in which they will work, as long as the cost of these employees does not exceed the specific dollar amount allocated to the school
- Hire all employees that report to him or her
- Purchase all supplies (including textbooks), furniture, and equipment that the school needs

[5] *Handbook on School-Based Management*, Prince William County Public Schools, March 1990.

- Structure the organization of the school
- Implement educational innovations.

The central office has mandated that each school implement shared decisionmaking and has established some basic parameters regarding SDM; it has, however, left the specific details of the governance process up to the individual school. Each school must involve building administrators, teachers, parents, and students in its shared decisionmaking. Teacher, parent, and student representatives are elected by their peers. The only other district requirement is that the SDM body be involved in the preparation of the annual plan that the school submits to the central office.

Each school must submit an annual school plan prepared by building administrators, teachers, and parents. The plan must outline what the school intends to do in the coming year, including any plans it has that deviate from the district's standard operating procedures and how it expects to achieve its goals. A budget showing how the school will pay for the proposed activities must accompany the plan. Some of the goals enumerated in the plan are districtwide and set by the school board—others are specific to the school. In addition, the plan must include a method of evaluating the school's progress toward each goal. This evaluation statement, in turn, becomes an important part of the superintendent's annual review of the school principal.

These annual school plans constitute an important part of Prince William County's SBM/SDM program: They form the basis on which schools request waivers from state or district regulations. The central office encourages schools to adopt innovative programs, but requires that they include the projects in their annual school plans. Schools must use the plan to defend the need for the waiver and to demonstrate how that deviation would serve both school- and district-level goals.

### SBM's Effect on District Organization and Services

The central office has provided a new structural framework to ensure the success of the SBM/SDM program. The district's schools are divided into three cross-level groups, or areas, with roughly the same number of students in each and similar profiles in terms of race and socioeconomic status. An associate superintendent oversees the implementation of school reform in his or her area.

This structure provides clear lines of reporting within the district. Principals report to and take orders from only two individuals: their area associate superintendent and the district superintendent. The district's associate superintendents for curriculum, services, and management can only monitor what is going on in schools and recommend changes; they cannot mandate changes within schools.

### Evaluating SBM

The central office's sophisticated plan for evaluating and assessing the SBM/SDM program involves measuring both the objective and subjective effects of decentralization. Its goal is to evaluate and assess the effect of site-based management and shared decisionmaking on (1) the schools' primary mission of educating children and (2) the work environment for teachers, staff, and building administrators. The plan evaluates and assesses data related to academic progress, attitudinal change, and secondary elements (e.g., student attendance, suspension/expulsion, staff absenteeism, and teacher turnover).

As its primary responsibility, the evaluation and assessment project collects, evaluates, and assesses objective data related to students' academic progress. To do so, it uses multiple indicators, the most important of which is standardized test scores. In addition, it uses such data as SAT scores, number of students in the advanced placement program, advanced placement test results, and the number of national merit scholarship winners.

The attitudinal component of the evaluation plan is designed to gauge changes in group attitudes on specific issues as a result of participation in the SBM/SDM program. It also measures the degree of group support for, and confidence in, the program. The central office relies on parents, elementary, middle, and high school students, teachers, staff, and principals to provide this subjective data.

The final component of the central office's evaluation and assessment project involves collecting and analyzing data in secondary areas likely to be affected, either directly or indirectly, by site-based management and shared decisionmaking. These areas include student attendance, teacher and staff absenteeism, teacher turnover, and the expulsion and suspension rates.

Some of the pilot SBM/SDM schools have established unique programs to supplement the district's efforts to reach out to parents

using opinion surveys. One high school uses a modified Delphi approach that involves sending school administrators to consult with groups of parents in parents' homes. These interviews allow the school to interpret and reframe parental concerns for additional parental onterviews, thus permitting the school to respond.